

THE USE OF THE BOW

NO. 1694

**DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher).”
2 Samuel 1:17, 18.***

THE translators have acted very properly in inserting the words, “the use of,” for that is what the passage means. But if you read it without those words, the sense is still the same— “He bade them teach the children of Judah the bow,” that is to say, how to use the bow. In modern times, critics have said that by the expression, “the bow,” is meant the song which David composed. And to sustain their notion, they quote from the Koran of Mahomet in which they tell us that there is a certain chapter called, “the Bow,” and, therefore, David called his song, “the bow,” as if so late an instance of oriental usage was at all to the point. I declare that there is nothing whatever in Scripture to justify the statement that the words, “the bow,” can be applied to David’s lament!

No doubt, some of the Psalms have titles given to them, but there is never an instance of a Psalm being quoted by its title. It is quoted by its *number*, never by its name. I accept the passage as our learned translators understood it—David bade them teach the children of Judah the bow. If any enquire, “What, then, is the connection? Why should David teach the people the use of the bow because Saul and Jonathan were slain? Why is the military order concerning the use of a certain instrument of war inserted here, when the passage is full of lamentation?” If any ask, I say, I answer most fitly, as I shall have to show you—it was the best memorial of that skillful archer, Jonathan, and of the other princes who had fallen by the arrows of the Philistines, that from the disastrous day of their slaughter, David caused his own tribe, over which he had chief power, to be trained in the use of that special weapon of war.

I. But now to our work. From my text I want to gather a few useful lessons. And the first is this—ACTIVITY IS A VALUABLE SOLACE FOR SORROW. The people were very grieved, for Saul and Jonathan, the king and the crown prince, were slain. David indulges their grief—he writes them a plaintive song which the daughters of Israel may sing. But to take their minds off their distress, he, at the same time, issues the order to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow—for activity is an effectual remedy in the time of sorrow. Certainly the opposite of it would tend

towards blank despair. Are any of you in great grief? Have you suffered a supreme loss?

Do not be tempted to brood over your affliction and to think that you ought to be excused from further service! Do not shut yourself up to meditate upon the great ill that has befallen you, so as to nurse your wrath against God. This can do you no good whatever! Rather imitate David, who, when his child was sick, fasted and prayed, but when it was dead, went into the house and ate bread, for he said, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." I beseech you do not fall under the temptation of Satan to cease from your daily activity—and especially from any holy service in which you are engaged for Christ.

It may be that your sorrow is not a bereavement, but disappointment in your work. You have not won those souls that you looked to win and, some that you thought were converted, have gone back. And now Satan tempts you to do no more—never to cast the net again, for you have toiled all night and taken nothing—never to sow again, for you have wasted your seed by the highway, and birds have devoured it. This is a suggestion of the Evil One. It will lead you into deeper anguish. I would say to you, O mourner, get up from the couch of ease! Shake yourself from the dust, O virgin daughter of Zion! Sit not down upon the dunghill in your grief, but bestir yourself, lest you sink into blacker woe and your bitterness become as wormwood and gall! While inaction will lead into blank despair, I am certain that *work* distracts the mind from the sad point upon which it is apt to thrust itself.

Nothing is more healthy than to have work to do. I have seen persons of leisure give way, most terribly, in the case of the loss of children. While I have known laboring people, who, I believe, have been as sensitive in heart, who have kept up bravely. Under God, I have attributed the difference to the fact that the poor woman must go to earn her daily bread, or must get about her domestic duties *whatever* happens, and the poor man must do his daily task, or else the family will be in need. Thus, toil has proved to be a blessed necessity by withdrawing the mind from the sorrow which would have engrossed it. You have heard of Alexander Cruden. Perhaps you do not know that he was crossed in love and met with certain other trials which drove him nearly mad—and yet Alexander Cruden did not become insane, for he engaged upon the immense work of forming a concordance of sacred Scripture—which concordance has become the great instrument by which we search the Word of God. This work kept him from becoming altogether insane. If I had to prescribe to "a mind diseased," I would say, "Enter upon good work and keep at it."

Dear Friends, if you are in trouble and Satan tempts you to get alone and to cease from the work of the Lord, resist the injurious suggestion! God the Holy Spirit is most likely to comfort you and to apply the precious promises of His Word to your soul if you pursue your Master's work with all your heart. Attend to His business and He will attend to

your business! Tell poor sinners about His wounds and He will bind up yours. Forget your cross in His! Forget your griefs in the griefs of the sons of men who are perishing for lack of knowledge—and you shall find the readiest way to consolation. A valuable solace for sorrow is activity, especially, I think, in reference to *new* work. It will help you much if a new trouble suggests to you new service. Old work does not always take the mind off from its vexatious, for we are apt to do it mechanically and as a matter of routine. But something altogether fresh will aid us sweetly to forget our trial.

Oh, to strike out some new path! To invent new honors for Jesus, new enterprises for His Kingdom, new attractions for His Gospel—this will help to charm away our grief! With many, the doing of any kind of service for Christ will be quite a novelty. I grieve to say it. These people are desponding. I am not so grieved at that, because if any man will not work, neither shall he eat. And if a Christian will not serve his Master, he shall not feast with the King's worthies. Oh, how much of joy many of you miss by not doing more for the poor, more for the ignorant, more for Christ!

The poet, Rogers, tells us and he throws the story into poetry which I forget—of a rich man in Venice who was the subject of despair. He became such a hypochondriac that he went down to the canal to drown himself. But on the way he was met by a poor little boy who tugged at his trousers and begged for bread. When the rich man called him an impostor, the boy besought him to come home with him and see his father and mother who were dying of starvation. He went up into the room and found the family literally perishing for lack of food! He immediately laid out the money which he had in his pocket in making them all glad with a hearty meal. And then he said to himself that there was something worth living for, after all. He had found a novel enjoyment which gave a fresh motive for living!

I would like to ask you who have suffered a great trouble whether the Lord may not be pressing you, by this means, into a new path of delight, directing you to a fresh method of glorifying God and doing good to your fellow men? I will sing you a song if you will, as sorrowful as David's lament, but I would rather teach you the use of the bow! I believe that I shall minister better to your comfort if I enlist you as soldiers in Christ's army and teach you to use His weapons, than if I should console you with the most plaintive minstrelsy of sadness. Do I speak to any here present who endure great earthly afflictions, but know nothing of spiritual things? Is it not the case that God often brings His wandering children to Himself by distresses? The way in which you are to be comforted, dear Friends, is *not* by going into the world, again, and seeking further pleasures there.

If God means to bless you, He may allow you to become so hungry that you may wish to fill your belly with the husks. You have spent your living riotously and now you are ready to despair. Round by that dark

corner of despair may be the way to your Father's house! To expel your present temporal grief, you need a spiritual grief concerning *sin*. If you learn of Jesus at this hour to repent of sin and to put your trust in Him, your soul will be awakened to say, "I will arise and go unto my Father," and then you will lose your hunger and forget the swine trough! Where? Why, amidst the music and dancing of your Father's house and in the joy of hearing Him say, "Let us eat and be merry, for this, My son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found."

Yes, David was right. The way to raise the people out of their despondency was to teach them the use of the bow—their own arrows would slay their grief—and the way to get you mourning ones out of your sorrow is to teach you those holy activities which lead a soul to trust in Christ and to find salvation at His feet. That is the first lesson which, I think, the text most sweetly teaches.

II. A second lesson is that AN ADMIRABLE USE OF DISASTER IS TO LEARN ITS LESSONS. What was the disaster? Saul and Jonathan had been shot by archers. The Philistines were evidently strong in the use of the bow, but Saul's army was short of archers and so they were not able to strike the Philistines at a distance. Before they came to close quarters, where Israel might have been a match for Philistia, the arrows of the Philistines had reached their king. Had they known how to use the bow, they might have been conquerors and, therefore, David hastens to teach the men of Judah the use of the bow.

Beloved Friends, I will suppose that you have met with failures—I refer to disasters peculiar to yourselves. What shall you do? Sit down and fret and trouble yourselves, and give up in despair? God forbid! As the men of Judah learned the use of the bow through their being beaten by the bow, so you gather wisdom from that which has befallen you! Have you been made to fly before your adversary? Then find out where your weakness is. Search and see. Is it a sin indulged? Is it some point where you ought to have been guarded, but where you have been unwatchful? Is it weakness in prayer? Is it neglect of the Word of God? Is it indifference to Divine Truths of God? Is it coldness of heart? Or what is it? If you have been defeated, there is a cause for it. If you have been cast down and brought low, say unto God, "Show me why You contend with me."

Has the Lord a controversy with you? Be not content till you have got to the bottom of it and found out the root that bears this gall and wormwood. Is not this the way of wisdom? May it not happen that the cause of the disaster is that God is not with you? What if *nothing* prospers with you? What if it is vain for you to rise up early, sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness, since the hand of God is against you? What if you are to have no pleasure in the things that once gave you satisfaction because God has set you as a target for His arrows—and in wrath is shooting at you? It may be so. Or you may not be one of His children at all, as yet, and He may be tossing you to and fro like a ball, that you may never

find rest until you humbly come and cry to Christ and seek mercy at His hands. Look and see whether it is so!

It is of no use to worry about the disaster—search out the *cause* of it. Strive to learn the lesson which it is meant to teach you. Is there any secret sin with you? Perhaps by looking at the defeat you may learn the way to victory. David judged that if they were defeated by the bow, they might yet win by the bow. It is right to learn from our adversaries. There is something to be learned from Satan. If he goes about, let us be diligent. If he seeks whom he may devour, let us seek whom we may save! And if he watches carefully to find out our weak points, let us watch those whom we would bless to find out how we may best reach their hearts. Many a man has grown rich through poverty, healthy through sickness and holy by being made conscious of sin! When he has been struck down, then has he cried out to God, and God has lifted him up. Woe to that man who will not “hear the rod, and Him that has appointed it.” I pray that you may diligently learn the lesson which every disaster would teach.

May not a misfortune which happens to a Church and to Christian people be, to them, a call to *action*—to general action? Saul had a little standing army and did not drill all the nation for war. But David says, “I will teach all my own tribe the use of the bow.” Now, whenever a Church begins to get low, dull, stupid—and many Churches go in that direction—when everybody seems to be asleep and the minister’s sermon is a kind of sanctified *snore*, and all the worship is steeped in slumber, why, what is to be done? Then is the time to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow and to wake them all up to holy enterprise! Say to them, “You must not allow a few to be doing the work of Christ, but *all* must do it! You must all be taught the use of the bow.”

It was the glory of the Moravians that all their members were missionaries and such ought to be the glory of every Church—every man, woman and child in the Church should take part in the battle for Jesus. This, by God’s Grace, is the cure for spiritual decline—teach the people the use of the bow! Let us learn lessons from defeat. Let us learn from the sin which has cast us down to cry unto God, the Mighty One, to hold us up! If we are, at this time, under some great failure in life, let us learn greater care. If we have been permitted to err, let us learn to watch. Do not sullenly confess, “I have done wrong,” but repent of it and ask God for Grace that you may be upheld in the future, like Peter, who was stronger after his fall than before it, and was set to strengthen his Brethren.

What is done cannot be undone, but we may so learn from it, by God’s teaching, that we may never do the same again. May God grant that this may be the case. If it were proper, I could sing to you tonight a song of mourning over the disasters of a soul, or of a Church, but I believe that I would not do you half as much good as by stirring you up to learn the use of the bow, that is to say, to rectify your errors and supply your defects!

III. Now, thirdly, another lesson. A NOBLE MONUMENT TO A FRIEND IS TO IMITATE HIS EXCELLENCES. How does that come from the text? Why, thus. When Jonathan and David communed together, they fixed the meeting by Jonathan's shooting certain arrows. It is evident that Jonathan was a man who greatly favored the use of the bow. And though his father did not largely introduce it into the army, yet Jonathan was well skilled therein. "Well then," says David, "in memory of Jonathan, instead of piling up a great monument, we will teach the children of Judah the use of the bow." Come, Brothers and Sisters, let this be your memorial to your dear father—if he was a child of God, be like he! If you want to keep in memory your beloved mother, exhibit in yourselves the virtues that shone in her.

That sweet child of yours has gone to Heaven and can never be forgotten. Her likeness hangs over the mantelpiece. I mean that dear little child who sang of Jesus when she died—if you want to remember her beyond all forgetfulness, then love her Savior and go where little Jane has gone! No memorial is more fit than imitation—be, yourself, the monument by exhibiting within yourself all that was good in the dear departed one. How specially true is this in connection with our Divine Lord! I see the Romanist continually putting up crosses by the roadside and, sometimes, on these there are hideous representations of a person dying by crucifixion. There are nails, a sponge, a spear and I know not what. This arises out of a natural desire to perpetuate the memory of the crucified Redeemer—but you will do far better, dear Brother, if you are, yourself, crucified with Christ—and if you exhibit in your own person that Divine self-denial, that blessed love, that superlative holiness which was found in Him.

Some will build a Church and lavish money upon architecture. I shall not condemn them, for their splendid generosity may savor of the spirit of that woman who broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment upon the Savior's feet. But I would suggest that to build up within one's self, by the power of God's Spirit, the Christ-like character is a better memorial than the best piece of architecture that can ever be put together! What if you should employ the greatest of sculptures and he, with cunning hands, should mold the marble till it emulated life? Would not the monument mainly keep in mind the *artist* and rather make men think of the costliness of the work than of anything else? Whereas, if you become, yourself, not in marble, but in living flesh, the image of Christ, then men will take notice of you—that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him—and this will keep Him best in memory. If we do what Christ would have done under our circumstances, we shall be exhibiting a far better memorial of Him than wealth can possibly purchase.

When David taught these people the use of the bow, every time they stringed an arrow they might remember Jonathan! And whenever a regiment of archers went through the streets to the battle, they brought Jonathan before the public mind. David instituted this form of royal artil-

lery, on purpose, so that Jonathan might be kept in mind. And you, dear Friends, every time you go forth to do the service of God, obediently and zealously, as Jesus did it, you put men in mind of Jesus and they say, "God has set these men in the world to be witnesses for Christ, to keep His name alive in the earth. These men are a blessing because Jesus, Himself, has blessed them."

I would thus stir you all up to endeavor all the days of your life to live and serve God, that the name of Jesus Christ shall be kept alive in this nation and throughout the world!

IV. Lastly, and but for a moment, I think that the form which this military order took, to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, may be allegorically applied, tonight to you, dear Friends. IT IS A GREAT ADVANTAGE TO BELIEVERS TO LEARN THE USE OF THE BOW, SPIRITUALLY. First, there is the bow of prayer. Its use has not gone out of date, but I wish that all of us knew how to shoot the arrows of the Lord's deliverance much better than we do. Holy men of old would pick out an arrow and when they had chosen it, they knew how to use it. They knew what they needed and they prayed for it. They fitted their arrow on the string—that is to say, they took God's promise, the promise that answered their desire—and, fitting the one to the other, they took straight aim at Heaven and watched the flight of the arrow petition! They knew to whom they were praying, as well as what they were praying for, and why they expected to be heard—and so they drew the bow of prayer with all their might.

When the man of God went up to the top of Carmel and there took his bow and drew it, there was no fear of his missing the mark. Or if, perhaps, the arrow had not force enough, he would pull the bow a second time, and a third time, and a fourth time, and a seventh time, till, at last, the arrow struck the mark. He would not come down from his watchtower till he knew that the arrow of his prayer was lodged in Heaven! In all times of tribulation, what is needed is that the children of Judah should know the use of the bow of prayer. When we heard of those fearful assassinations in Ireland, the news reached the bulk of us on the Lord's Day, and men of God went to their loopholes of retreat and shot up to Heaven prayers for poor Ireland! It was the best thing that could be done.

I have more faith in prayer than in police and prisons. In any time of national need, the men that save a nation are the men of prayer! What? Not the wise statesmen? Certainly, wise statesmen—but who makes them wise? God has power over all minds and, in answer to the prayer from this pulpit, He can visit yonder mind in St. Stephen's! From a humble cottage in the western highlands, there may go up to God a cry that shall come down upon the Prime Minister and direct his thoughts! Remember what Queen Mary used to say when she tried to bring popery back to Scotland? She said that she was more afraid of John Knox's *prayers* than of all the armies that the Scottish lords could get together!

She was right, for once! When men overlook prayer, they overlook the greatest factor in human affairs! The mystic rod of God is still in the hand of many a Moses among us—a rod which brings victory to Israel and defeat to Amalek.

The strength of the Church lies not in the oratory of the pulpit, but in the oratory of the closet! That Church of God that shall do most *for the world* is the Church that shall do most *with God*! He can rule men for God who is ruled by God for men! He that gives up his soul to God that God may write His will upon his life, is the mighty man! The man who has had the will of God worked in him by the Holy Spirit and can work it out into fervent prayer—he is the man, who, though princes and potentates know it not, sits nearer to the helm of affairs than they can reach! I could write you a plaintive hymn about the woes of Ireland and about the sins of men and the evils of the times, but I had far rather teach you the use of the bow of prayer—for then, if you could send your longings up to the Lord, full many a blessing would come upon the land and the adversaries of the Lord would be discomfited—and peaceful and happy days would dawn.

Perhaps I speak to some here who do not know anything about praying. I dare say that the Brother is here who listened to a sermon on Peckham Rye, which was rather a wild one, I am afraid. In that discourse the preacher said to all his congregation that if they would go home and ask God for anything, the Lord would give it to them. I cannot endorse so wild a statement! However, this man thought that the preacher, having said it, it was true—and having never prayed before in all his life, he put the question to the test of a certain event—and that certain event fell out as he desired. Then he began to tremble, for he judged that, assuredly, there is a God!

Now, I do not say to you, dear Hearers, that whatever all of you shall ask in prayer you shall receive. I would not say that to you ungodly ones. But I do say that if you will ask for mercy and salvation and eternal life—and anything that is promised to believing sinners—you shall have it. I wish you would try the experiment, for you would find that the Lord never breaks a promise. If you read a promise made to a sinner, it is made to you! Go ahead and plead it, and the Lord will grant it. I will be surety for Him that He will keep His word. Trust Him and try, and thus learn the use of the bow! God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE LOVE OF JONATHAN AND THE LOVE OF JESUS NO. 2336

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*“Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women.”
2 Samuel 1:26.*

DAVID was a poet and when he found that his best-beloved friend had fallen by the arrows of the Philistines, he wept greatly and then he cheered his heart by writing the very fine elegy which, in later years was called, “The Song of the Bow.” Even if David’s lamentation is judged according to the canons of literary taste, it must be placed among the first of poetical compositions. Thus David tried to keep his friend’s memory green—the song was meant to be a memorial of him. Such friends as Jonathan are not common and when we have had them, we must not forget them. It is sad that, in these days, friendship is proverbially a frail thing. Friends are like swallows that are with us in our summertime and gone when the damps of autumn begin to gather. When a man has a faithful friend, let him grapple him to his side with hooks of steel! And when he loses him, let him know that he has lost what will be very hard to replace and let him not forget his friend though he is buried beneath the sod. True friendship likes to fashion memorials of the departed. We keep mementos of the loved ones we have lost. We like to think of the happy days of communion we have had together and we will not allow the cherished name to be blotted out from the memory of men.

When I thought of this subject, I said to myself, “I shall see many, tonight, who are lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I shall be face to face with thousands who love Him as they love their own soul.” I believe that is my happiness now. Well then, beloved Friends, let us who love Christ keep Him always in memory. If you can speak of His name, be not silent. If you can make melody in honor of Jesus, in the great congregation, take down the minstrel’s harp and lay your fingers among the strings and bring out sweetest music to His dear name that thousands may hear! But if you have a feebler instrument, sing or play to the two or three and let those who love you know that you love your Lord best of all! Or if your tongue fails you, use your pen to let men know who Jesus is. Say, with the Psalmist, “My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.”

What shall *we* do to keep Christ’s name before the sons of men? Let us be inventive and often make the winds and waves to bear the story of His life and love to those who know it not. I would whisper in the ear of some-

one, "If you love Jesus, how is it that you are never at His Table?" If there is anyway of keeping Him in memory, which is better than every other, it is the one which He has, Himself, chosen—"This do in remembrance of Me." How do you excuse yourselves, you lovers of Christ, who have never kept up this feast of love? This is one of His dying requests, "Meet and remember Me." And yet, though you say that you love Him, and I will not challenge the truth of what you say, you have never yielded obedience to His loving request and come to eat the bread and drink of the cup which are the memorials of His broken body and His poured-out blood. David, you could sing of Jonathan, though there was no law that you should do so! What will you say of some who love the Christ of God better than you loved Jonathan and yet have never remembered Him in the way in which He asked to be remembered, but have cast behind their back the sweet forget-me-not of the Communion Table?

Let that stand as a preface. May the Lord put our hearts in tune, now, while we think upon two things! The first is the small type, *Jonathan's love to David*. The second is the infinite anti-type, *Christ's love to men*. Perhaps it will be sweetest, tonight, if we can, each one, say, "*Christ's love to me*. He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*." That expression will be in harmony with the words of the text, "Your love to me was wonderful."

I. First, then, we have to think a little about JONATHAN'S LOVE TO DAVID.

Jonathan's was a singular love, because of *the pureness of its origin*. Jonathan loved David out of great admiration of him. When he saw him come back with the head of Goliath in his hand, he loved him as a soldier loves a soldier, as a brave man loves another brave man. He felt that there was the right kind of metal in that young man and though Jonathan was the king's son, and heir-apparent to the throne, we find that he, "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt." He felt that such a hero, who could so trust his God, and so expose his life, and come off so victorious, deserved his utmost love. It did not begin in self-interest—it did not begin in relationship—but it began in the likeness that Jonathan saw between his own nature and that of David. It was one brave man loving another brave man.

Jonathan's love proved, also, to be *most intense*. It is said that, "he loved him as his own soul." He would at any moment have sacrificed his life to preserve the life of David. In fact, I do not doubt that Jonathan thought David's life much more valuable than his own and that he was quite willing to expose himself to peril that David might be preserved. Jonathan's was a very intense love. May we see more of this kind of love among Christian men! May they love each other for Christ's sake and because of the love of God which they see in one another—and may they be intense in their affection!

Jonathan's love was *very disinterested* because, as I have said, Jonathan was heir-apparent to the throne, but David had been anointed king by Samuel. The kingdom was to be taken from the house of Saul and given to the house of David. Very naturally, the young prince Jonathan might have felt, first, envy, and then hatred of David, who was to supplant

him. But instead of that, he said to him one day, very touchingly, "You shall be king over Israel and I shall be next unto you." He meant to be his friend and his helper, taking joy in seeing David wear the crown which might have adorned his own brow. Happy Jonathan, to be able to put himself in the background like that and to feel that, if David was first, it was what he, himself, desired! That friendship, in which a man can set himself on one side for the sake of another, is not yet so common that we can have it in the streets.

Jonathan's was a love which *bore up under all opposition*, for he soon found that Saul, his father, in his black heart, hated David. Saul could not bear the thought that another man would take the place which he coveted for himself, though he did not, himself, deserve to keep it. He wished to see David dead and because Jonathan took David's part, Saul was exceedingly angry and made Jonathan's lot hard to bear. Yet Jonathan did not cast off his friend—he clung to David through good report and through evil report. Jonathan "is faithful to his father and very obedient to him, but still, he would not give up his friend, David, and he would sooner be in jeopardy of the javelin of Saul than end the friendship that existed between himself and God's chosen servant.

And this love was *very active*, for you know how he pleaded for David with his father. He went out into the field and took counsel with David. He arranged plans and methods for David's preservation and, on one occasion, we find that he, "went to David in the wood and strengthened his hand in God." Yes, his love was not a matter of mere talk—it was real, practical, active—it was a love which never failed. When the arrow of the Philistine went through the heart of Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, it struck the name of David that was engraved there—

**"He loved him long, and loved him well,
And loved him to the death,"**

so that David could truly say, "Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women."

Now, dear Friends, do you not think that when we read a story like that of Jonathan and David, it should stir up in us the desire, not so much to have such a friend, as to *be* such a friend as Jonathan was to David? Any man can selfishly desire to have a Jonathan, but he is on the right track who desires to find a David to whom he can be a Jonathan! There is great joy in life with real friendship on both sides. Some people expect friendship to be always heaping its treasures upon them, but true friendship has two hands, two feet and two eyes. You cannot have a real friendship that is all for taking, and never for *giving*. David loved Jonathan as Jonathan loved David. May that blessed Spirit of God, who teaches us to love even our enemies, help us to cultivate sanctified friendships and to be willing to help those who are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ in time of need!

I shall say no more upon that part of my subject, but I hope it will rebuke some who are no friends at all. Oh, how often have we met with such! They are very friendly when their legs are under your mahogany, but they are not so friendly when you have no mahogany and have hardly a deal table left. They think all the world of you while you can be a ladder by which they climb the wall of prosperity, but when they are on the top of

the wall, they too often say that they never saw that ladder in all their lives—and you may take it away! We continually see that kind of thing among men of the world. May it not be so among Christians! May we be true to all who are our friends, as we would be generous even to any who are our foes, if such persons are in existence!

II. But I want, now, to talk of something more sweet and more sure. **THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO ME.** Using the first personal pronoun, because it is in the text—“Your love to *me* was wonderful.”

I hope that many here will be helped to use that same pronoun, each one for himself, or for herself. I do not wish to preach tonight—I want, rather, to be a sort of guide, just to go through the exercises that others may do the same. I am to speak of love which I trust many feel, which I hope they may feel even more than the speaker does—and let it be the ambition of every one of us to love Christ more and more. Let us think of Christ as present here, tonight, for so He is, according to His promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” There He stands! With closed eyes, faith perceives Him and she cries, “Your love to me was wonderful.”

I think that we feel this most when *we see our Savior die*. Sit down at the foot of the Cross and look up. Behold that sacred brow with the thorny wreath upon it. See those blessed eyes, red with weeping. Mark those nailed hands that once scattered benedictions. Gaze on those bleeding feet which hurried on errands of mercy. Watch till you can peer into that gaping side—how deep the gash—how wide the breach! Look how the water and the blood come streaming forth! This is the Lord of Life and Glory who thus dies amid derision and scorn—suffering, the Just for the unjust—to bring us to God! Oh, if you can picture Christ on the Cross, and believe that He died for you, you will be led to cry, “Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of mothers or of wives! Your love to me was—I cannot describe what it was—it was wonderful—as full of wonders as the heavens are full of stars, or as a forest is full of leave? Your love, as I see it in Your death, was wonderful.”

Do you picture David saying this as he thinks of the body of Jonathan pierced with the arrows of his enemies? “Your love to me was wonderful.” Will you not stand so, tonight, in imagination, over your Savior’s body, as you see it wrapped in spices and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea? Ere yet the stone is rolled to the cave’s mouth, will you not look on that mangled form and say, “In very truth, Your love to me was wonderful”?

Beloved Friends, sometimes we feel as if our love to our departed ones would know another great flood if they could come back again. You have lost—no, I will not harrow up your feelings—have all lost those most dear and your sorrow was great as you laid them in the grave. But if, tonight, when you reached your home, you should find, sitting in that room of yours, the beloved one come back, I think that your love would suddenly leap up into an ecstasy and it would be greater than it ever was before! “Has my husband returned to me? Has my spouse come back to me? Has my mother, my child, been restored to me?” Oh, what a feast of love our

souls would have if there could be such a reunion in our bereaved households! Well, remember that *He who died for us rose again—*

“He lives, the great Redeemer lives,”

lives with our love still within His heart! He lives to love us as much in His eternal Glory as He did in the shame and spitting while He was on earth! Come, give your love room, tonight, as you remember Him as dead, but rejoice in Him as living!

I think, also, that we sometimes feel the greatest love to dear friends when we find others doing them despite. When David found that Jonathan’s body had been dishonored by the Philistines, that they had taken away the bodies of King Saul and his sons to hang them on the wall of Bethshan, then was he sorely troubled and his love broke forth, again, in sighs, cries and tears. And I must say, tonight, that *I love my Lord all the more because of the insults others heap upon Him*. When I have lately seen books written against His atoning Sacrifice. When I meet with men calling themselves Christians, who speak lightly of the sacred Expiation and even of the Divine Person of the great Sacrifice, my heart first burns with indignation against the traitors—true successors of Judas—and then my soul cries, “My Savior, by the dishonor that they put on You, I love You all the more! By the shame that they again cast on You, as though You were a hundred times crucified, I vow to serve You with a hundredfold energy and force of concentrated love, for Your love to me was wonderful.” Some can speak lightly of Christ. Perhaps they never knew such love as He has shown to me. Some can despise His blood. Possibly they were never washed from such sins as mine. Some think lightly of His faith. Perhaps they have never had such communion with Him as my heart has known. I must say of Him, “Your love to me was, is, and always shall be wonderful, passing all loves supposable in Heaven or earth besides.”

Now let me briefly tell the story of that love—it is a long story—the love of Christ to me. Part of its wonder *lies in the object of this love*, that it should be bestowed upon *me!* “Your love to *me.*” Dear Brother, dear Sister, will you talk about it, just now, to yourself?” It is a wonder that Christ should love anybody, but is it not the greatest wonder of all that He should love me? Who am I, and what is my father’s house, that Christ should love me?”—

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

Your love to me! There was special undesert—there were many reasons why love should have passed me by, but Your love to me was wonderful that You should single me out. Tell it in Heaven that there is no greater wonder there than that Christ should love me! And when you get there, say to all the bright spirits before the Throne of God, “There is no greater wonder in the salvation of you all than there is in *my* salvation. Your love to *me*, my Lord,” and you will bow adoringly at Christ’s feet as you say it, “Your love to me was wonderful.”

Then throw the emphasis on the first word, “*Your love to me,*” and you have another part of the wonder, that is, in the Giver of this love. For a man to love me, well, should not men love their kind? But for *God* to love me, for the Infinite, for the inconceivably lovely One, whose ideal of that which is loveable must be far beyond human conception, for *Him* to love

me, this is a miracle, indeed! Can you imagine it, that God, who is greater than immensity, whose life is longer than time, that God the all-boundless One, should love you? That He should think of you, pity you, consider you, this is all very well—but that He should *love* you, that His heart should go out to you, that He should choose you, that He should have engraved you on the palms of His hands, that He should not rest in Heaven without you, that He should not think Heaven complete until He brings you there, that you should be the bride and Christ the Bridegroom, that there should be eternal love between Him and you—oh, as you think of it, lift up your hands with adoring wonder and say, “Your love to me was wonderful.”

Now begin, if you can, to *consider the commencement of this love*. When did God begin to love His own elect? There was a time when He began to make the worlds, but from eternity He has loved His chosen. Before the first flash of light illuminated the primeval darkness, God loved His people! Before the first pulsation of life came into human bodies, long before there were such *beings as men and women*, He loved His own. He saw them in the glass of predestination and foreknowledge and He loved them. His delights even then were with the sons of men. His love had no beginning, it was like Himself, self-existent, starting from itself, and there never was a time when God did not love His own people. Think of that wonder of Grace, that such a speck of dust as you are should have been loved from eternity! That such a handful of ashes as I am should have been loved from before all worlds! Tell it as with voice of trumpet, for God has said it, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.”

Christ’s love, then, is wonderful in its beginning and when *it began to work on me*, it was still wonderful, for what did I do? I refused it. When Christ came in robes of love to me and presented Himself as a candidate for my heart’s acceptance, I told Him that I would not have Him! There was a wanton world that had my heart. There was the devil, himself, in all manner of sinful shapes—and he had my hand—and I was his. Was it not so with some of you, that Christ wooed you many a year and you would not have Him? He came to you, sometimes, threatening, and sometimes inviting. He came to you by Providences, by preachers, by books, by His good Spirit. Yet though you turned your back on Him, He never turned His back on you. He would not take, “No,” for an answer—

**“Determined to save, He watched o’er my path
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.”**

Think of a man who used to come staggering out of a public house late at night, yet He is loved of God! Or of a thief, whose hair was cut short in the prison, yet He was loved of God—and here he is, tonight, sitting at Jesus’ feet, rejoicing in that love! Oh, what songs there will be in Heaven concerning the love of Christ to His own and the rebuffs which the dear Lover of our souls received by the sad, sad usage of ungodly, willful men! “Your love to me was wonderful.”

And when *Christ’s love led Him to come here and take our Nature*, was it not wonderful? He reigned enthroned in Heaven. Seraphim and cherubim gladly did His bidding. He was God and yet He came down from yonder royal palace to that stable at Bethlehem, and to the manger where the

horned oxen fed. 'Tis He! 'Tis He! But as George Herbert reminds us, He has unrobed Himself and hung His azure mantle on the sky, and all His rings upon the stars—and there He lies, a babe in swaddling bands, taking human nature into union with His Divinity because He loved us! Truly, You blessed Child, whom I would take into my arms as Simeon did and say, “Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word: for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” Your love to me was wonderful! Behold Christ with the scepter of Heaven in His hand, and then see Him sitting on the edge of a well, talking to an adulterous woman! Gaze on Him with the harps of angels ringing out His praise and then see Him with all the riff-raff of Jerusalem scoffing at Him and bidding Him come down from the Cross! If He stooped to become a Man like ourselves, and stooped lower, still, even unto death, truly may each saved one cry to Him, “Your love to me was wonderful.”

There is one thing that makes the love of Christ more wonderful than anything else and that is that He not only took our Nature, but *He took our sin*. There, scrape it up together, the filthy stuff that has made God, Himself, to sicken at the thought of man—I mean the sin and the pollution of our lives! Behold, the Lord has gathered it up together in one foul heap, enough to putrefy the *universe*—and He has laid it all on Christ! And the great Sin-Bearer takes it upon Himself as though it were His own—but it was not! He suffers for it, He bears the sentence of Justice on account of it and then He hurls it all away into the abyss of oblivion where it shall never be found, again! My Savior, did You bear *my* sin in Your own body on the tree? Were you condemned for *my* condemnation? Then, in very deed, Your love to me was wonderful!

I do not know how to break my text up so as to bring it home to each Believer. I wish that everyone here, who really has known Christ's love, would help me by a personal thought *upon the brotherly and condescending character of this love*. Times have been when we, who love Christ's name, have been in trouble and He has been very near to us. Times have been when we have been misrepresented and abused—and He has smiled, oh, so sweetly on us! Times have been when bodily pain has made us very faint and He has put underneath us the everlasting arms. Speak as you find, Beloved—how have you found the Lord Jesus in your dark days, in your heavy days, in your weary days? Have you not found Him a matchless Friend? I can bear my own witness that there is no comfort like His comfort! There is no smile like His smile! There is no touch of help like His delivering hand. “Your love to me was wonderful.”

Sometimes, when I have told the story of God's goodness to me, a Christian friend has said, “Have you not written all that down?” “No, I have not,” I have replied. “Will you not take care, before you die, that it is all written down?” I have said, “No, I do not know that I shall.” Now perhaps your life's story will die out with yourself, yet have there not been very marvelous touches of Christ's love in it? Have there not been windows of agates and gates of carbuncle through which you have seen your Lord's face and can you not say, tonight, looking over your pilgrim path from the first day until now, “Lord, You have been always with me. Your

love to me was wonderful in condescending, helpful fellowship in the time of my need”?

Think, also, *of the comforting and thoughtful provisions of Christ's love*. Sometimes you have been well-near slipping, not merely as to trouble, but as to sin. Our lives are not all to our credit—there have been sad moments when unbelief has crept in on the back of thoughtlessness and you have been almost a skeptic. There have been evil moments when sin has insinuated itself into the imagination and you have almost done that which would have been your ruin. Have there not been times in your life when you have been struck and, if there had not been Someone to hold you up, you would have fallen, almost unconsciously fallen, and there have lain down to die? But oh, how Jesus has watched over you and cared for you! Never mother nursed her babe with such care as Christ has given to you! When you look back, sometimes, and see the pit from which you have been preserved, into which you might have fallen—when you meet with some old friend who used, years ago, to be singing at your side, and is now a drunk or profane—you may ask, “Why should he be like that any more than I should? Who has made me to differ? What but the Grace of God has kept me until now?” Ah, then you see how Christ's love to you has been wonderful, surpassing the love of women!

But the love of Christ to us is most of all wonderful *in its plans for the future*. You know not, and you cannot conceive, what He will yet do for you! You are in trouble, are you? Well, joy comes in the morning. But now, you have to drink the bitter cup and God gives you pills that you do not like. Take them at His hand, for they are meant for your good. 'Tis but a little while and then sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away! Has any redeemed man here any notion of what God has prepared for them that love Him? You shall stand among the perfected and go in and out among the holy! You shall be where no trouble shall ever reach you, or even the noise and dash of a wave of sorrow ever reach your ears. You shall be where it shall be your joy to serve God without mistake, without transgression and without omission. You shall behold the face of the King in His beauty, not now and then, but forever, without a cloud or a veil between! You shall find it your delight to praise Him and your voice shall be heard amid the choirs of the glorified as you adore the Lamb whose love to you has been so wonderful. And what will be your employments in Heaven? Ah, that I cannot tell you, but they shall be employments that shall be equally honorable and delightful!

I have told you before what I sometimes dream shall be my lot in Glory—to stand not here and preach to a handful of people, though it is truly a large handful—but to stand upon some starry orb and preach of Christ to whole constellations at once and thunder out my remembrances of His sweet love to myriads of beings who have never heard of Him as yet, for they have never sinned, but who will drink in all the tidings of what Jesus did for sinful men! And each of you, according to your training for it, shall make known to angels, principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of God! There is plenty of room for you all, for God's universe will need millions upon millions of messengers to go through it all and tell out the story of redeeming love. And we, I believe, are here in training for that

eternal work of making known to illimitable regions of space and countless myriads of intelligent beings whom God has created, but who have never fallen, the story of this little planet and of the God who loved it so that He came here and died that He might save His people from their sins.

Get ready, Brothers and Sisters, for the eternity which is so near! Within about a hand's breadth, you and I shall be in eternity! Even if we live to be 80 or 90, or fulfill the count of a hundred years, it is but a little while and we shall have quitted these dark shores and landed in the everlasting brightness of endless glory, that is, if we know the love of Christ, today, and trust in Christ today. We shall go on and on forever and forever experiencing more and more of this great Truth of God, "Your love to me was wonderful."

Now let each one answer this question— Can you say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me"? If not, you are an unhappy man. God make you even more unhappy until you come and look to Jesus Christ as men looked to the bronze serpent—and as by their looking they were healed, so by your looking may you be made to live tonight! Remember that—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 SAMUEL 20.

Verse 1. *And David fled front Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life? David had an enemy upon the throne and God gave him a friend in the heir to the throne. If you have an enemy, you have also a friend—God sets the one over against the other in His Providence. Set the one over against the other in your thoughts and be you comforted thereby. David might have been very heavy at heart about Saul and so he was, but Jonathan came in to be the makeweight on the other side and turn the scale in favor of the son of Jesse. Of him David enquired, "What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?"*

2. *And he said unto him, God forbid; you shall not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so. One admires Jonathan for defending Saul—he will not believe anything bad of his father. Children should never believe anything evil of their parents unless it is forced upon them—this rule is a part of the command, "Honor your father and your mother."*

3. *And David swore moreover, and said, Your father certainly knows that I have found grace in your eyes; and he says, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death. He wanted Jonathan to believe the truth, namely, that Saul was seeking to kill him, and that he was in great danger from the wrath of the king. Therefore he took a double oath*

that it was so. It is not for Christians to imitate David in this respect, for our Lord's command to His disciples is, "Swear not at all, but let your communication be, Yes, yes; no, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil."

4. *Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatever your soul desires, I will even do it for you.* Love promises large things. One is reminded, here, of the love of Christ and of how He says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."

5, 6. *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even: If your father at all misses me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem, his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.* The family of David was a godly household and they had a meeting, not for pleasure, but for sacrifice—a special family gathering for worship and David must be there. He spoke no untruth—he did desire to go to Bethlehem.

7, 8. *If he say thus, It is well; your servant shall have peace: but if he is very angry, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant; for you have brought your servant into a Covenant of the LORD with you: notwithstanding, if there is in me iniquity, slay me yourself; for why should you bring me to your father?* These two men had entered into a solemn Covenant before God that they would be friends for life, so David pleaded with Jonathan. He was innocent—he knew that he had done no evil and, therefore, he put it to Jonathan, "If I am what your father thinks me to be, slay me yourself."

9-11. *And Jonathan said, Far be it from you: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? Or what if your father answers you roughly? And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.* Quite alone, away from their troops, where they could talk together without being overheard. These two good men sought private fellowship and do you not think that if we love Christ, we shall want to get alone with Him? Shall we not say to Him, "Let us go out into the field"? Where there is no *private* devotion, there is no devotion at all. If we never get alone with Christ, we are altogether strangers both to Him and also to His love.

12-15. *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there is good toward David, and I then send not unto you, and show you; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will show you, and send you away, that you may go in peace: and the LORD be with you, as He has been with my father. And you shall not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: but also you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever: no, not when the LORD has cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth.* In Jonathan's great love, he wished not only to be David's friend, himself, but that all his children should be in love with the same valiant hero. Brothers and Sisters, our love to Christ

makes us long to see our children love Him, too. I will not believe that you have any love to Christ unless you pray that your boys and your girls may also love Him. Dear children of godly parents, our heart's desire and prayer to God for you is that you may love your mother's God, and trust your father's Savior.

16-18. *So Jonathan made a Covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow is the new moon: and you shall be missed, because your seat will be empty.* David was not a nobody—if he was away, he was missed. I wish that all attendants at the house of prayer would remember that when they are away, they are missed. Perhaps some of you have come, tonight, from some little chapel where you will be greatly missed. I am not going to thank you for coming here because I am possibly unconsciously causing pain to your pastor and I do not want to rob him of one of his sheep. David's seat is empty, tonight, and he will be missed.

19-23. *And when you have stayed three days, then you shall go down quickly, and come to the place where you did hide yourself when the business was in hand, and shall remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of you, take them; then come you: for there is peace to you, and no hurt; as the LORD lives. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond you; go your way: for the LORD has sent you away. And as touching the matter which you and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between you and me forever.* Thus He arranged how to let David know in case he was in danger. Love is thoughtful. Love would keep its object out of harm's way. Therefore, as we love any, let us try to preserve them from sin—let us endeavor to warn them when temptation is near, that they may not fall by the hand of the enemy.

24-27. *So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul spoke not anything that day: for he thought, Something has befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Why comes not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor today? David was the son of Jesse, but he was Saul's own son-in-law, yet, out of contempt, the angry king calls him, "the son of Jesse."*

28-30. *And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray you; for our family has a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he has commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away, I pray you, and see my brethren. Therefore he comes not unto the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, You son of the*

perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own confusion, and unto the confusion of your mother's nakedness? He was in such a passion that he began to abuse his own wife, the mother of his own son! In the East, if you want to sting a man most severely, give evil names to his mother, and surely, in the West as well, if anyone has anything to say against a man's mother, it cuts her son to his heart if he is what he ought to be.

31. *For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the ground, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Therefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.* Saul knew that David, and not Jonathan, was to succeed him on the throne. He gives Jonathan warning of that fact, and seeks his rival's life.

32. *And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Why shall he be slain? What has he done?* Very reasonable questions, very properly put.

33-42. *And Saul cast a javelin at him to strike him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond you? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept, one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed forever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city. Behold the love of Jonathan and David! Here was a brother born for adversity who clung to his friend in the day of danger, and even jeopardized his own life that he might defend David. Let us see, here, a faint emblem of what our great Friend, the Lord Jesus, has done for us.*

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ENQUIRING OF GOD

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*“And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD,
saying, Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?”
2 Samuel 2:1.*

You perceive, dear Friends, that, although David knew that he was anointed to be king over Israel, yet he would not take a step towards his rightful position without first asking guidance from God and, moreover, he was not content with a general direction, but wanted to have a particular and special indication as to where he was to go. It was not enough for God to say to him, “Go up”—he wants to know precisely to which town of Judah he shall go!

Nor, mark you, was this an exception to David's usual habit. From his youth up, he had been accustomed to ask the Lord's direction in all cases of difficulty. When he fled from Saul and went to Nod, to Abimelech the priest, Doeg told Saul that Abimelech *enquired of the Lord* for David. It was not enough for David that he had Goliath's sword, he must also have guidance from God. When he was in the town of Keilah, which he had rescued from the Philistines, after he had twice enquired of the Lord whether he should do so, he asked whether the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul and, as a result of the oracular response which he obtained from God, he was able to make good his escape. Afterwards, when David had become king over Israel in Hebron, before he fought with the Philistines, he enquired of the Lord, “Shall I go up to the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?” The Lord's answer was favorable and David gained a great victory. But when the Philistines came up again, David did not go out to fight with them until he had once more enquired of the Lord—and then it was that God gave him that memorable answer, “And let it be when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself; for then shall the Lord go out before you, to smite the hosts of the Philistines.” David was a man who always needed to see God's finger pointing out the right road, to hear God's voice, saying, “This is the way, walk you in it.” And he never seemed to be satisfied unless he could hear the sound of his Master's feet close behind him, or see a clear indication that his Master was just in front of him, or walking by his side!

I hold up David to you as a model for your imitation in this respect, although I am going to leave David and talk more generally of the duty of enquiring of God as to what we shall do when we are in any difficulty

and, indeed, of enquiring of Him at all times, whether we are in difficulty or not!

I. My first remark is that TO ENQUIRE OF THE LORD AND TO SEEK GUIDANCE AT HIS HANDS IS THE DUTY OF ALL CHRISTIANS.

This may be inferred from God's relationship to them. God is their Father and they are His children—minors who have not yet come of age. When a son is of age, it is respectful and often very prudent for him to still consult his experienced sire, but the child in his minority should venture upon nothing of importance without first going to tell his father. And if that child is beset by many false friends—by those who would mislead and ruin him—it will be his privilege as well as his duty to be often running to his parent and saying, “Father, what shall I do in this matter? What is true and what is not? Show me what you would have me do.” If God is our Father, we are His children. And if we do not consult Him, surely we are but sorry children. We lose a great blessing and incur no small guilt if, professing to be the sons and daughters of our Father who is in Heaven, we never ask Him to direct our way!

We also talk of God as our Shepherd. And an important part of a shepherd's duty is that of guiding his flock. What would you think if, in the East, where the shepherd leads the way, the sheep should all think themselves wise enough to find the road alone? Why, the flocks would soon be broken up and the pastoral relationship would become mere farce! If God is your Shepherd, follow Him. Often say to Him, “Show me the footsteps of the flock.” Desire always to hear the Shepherd's voice, for this is the mark of God's sheep! “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” How can you call God your Shepherd if you do not follow Him and never consult Him?

Do you not know also, dearly Beloved, that Christ calls us His spouse? But what sort of spouse would she be who never entrusted any of her secrets to her husband and who asked no counsel of him even when she came into dire distress? There may be some women who are wiser than their husbands and who can give advice rather than require to ask it, but it is not so in this case, for never did any other husband have so weak and foolish a spouse as Jesus Christ has! In fact, her only wisdom is to confess her folly and to throw herself into her Husband's arms, and cry—

“Lead me all my journey through!”

What can be our reason for calling God our Lord if we refuse to consult Him? Do not even the heathen always conclude that a god is to be consulted? Though their lying oracles have deluded them, yet have they always been right in the idea that the very thought of godhead implied guidance! And shall we turn away from Jehovah who really can guide us? While the heathen look to stocks of wood and stone, shall we confide in human oracles and neglect to consult God who knows all things?

I find *an argument for this Truth of God in the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.* What is our blessed Lord to us? He is a Prophet. But how can He be a Prophet to us if we never go to Him? What does the sacred mantle that He wears mean if He is never consulted? Is not His office a mere

name, an empty title, an office which has no value, if we call Him Prophet and yet never seek His face, nor say to Him, "What is the way that I am to take? Be pleased to direct me in it." He is a Priest—but is it not part of a priest's duty to use the Urim and the Thummim upon His breastplate and to show to those who go to Him what is the proper path for them to take? But how can I call Christ my Priest if I never consult Him? He is neither Prophet nor Priest to me if I choose my own way or cut out my own path for myself.

In one place, at least, Christ is called a Counselor—"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." But how is He your Counselor if you never consult Him? I cannot think that Christ takes upon Himself empty names and titles! I read in a Preface to our Bible, "James, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland." There is an empty title, for he was never king of France, though he was called so. But Christ has no empty titles! He is called King because He reigns! And He is called Counselor because He gives advice to His people and pleads their cause! If you would not, therefore, make out Christ's offices to be worthless, and His glorious titles to be but empty words, go and consult Him, for thus you shall make His heart glad and magnify His name and prove your love to Him!

But, dear Friends, there is an argument which comes closer home than this. *Our own character should teach us the duty of enquiring of the Lord.* If you know yourself rightly, you know that you are very far from being wise. If I understand myself rightly, I was born like the wild ass colts—with strong passions and much willfulness, but with no knowledge, or experience—and needing much guidance for the whole of life. What is the experience of the most experienced of men worth? I can conceive that in the eyes of God, the greatest wisdom of Solomon was the greatest folly, and that the experience of Job was but as the knowledge of a day! One of Job's friends said, "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing." And when we think we know the most, we generally know the least.

You have probably noticed that good men usually fail just where they think they are strongest, yes, and where they really *are* strongest! Noah was a preacher of righteousness, yet did he fail in righteousness when his sons saw him in a state of drunkenness. Moses was exceedingly meek, yet did he lose his temper and say, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we fetch you water out of this Rock?" Look, too, at Job, one who excelled in patience, yet he failed in patience. And you and I will find that the devil will carry our hearts by storm, not where we think the walls are weak, or the fortress is dismantled, but just where the flag waves defiantly over the strongest and loftiest part of our bastion, for Satan delights to pull down our lofty things of which we are so proud—just as God loves to pull down the lofty things of sin! See to it then, Christian, since you are so weak and since you cannot see a day, nor a minute before you, that you often enquire of your God! I think, too, your past

indiscretions and the distresses into which your willfulness has driven you might teach you henceforth to wait only upon God.

I shall give only one other argument, here, because I need not prove what all admit, but what so few practice. *The Christian should enquire of his God for his own avowed objective in life.* We profess, though we do not carry it out as we ought, that we are living for God. Is there a man living who could truly say, with Paul, “For to me to live is Christ”? I believe there are hundreds and thousands of such men, but I do not believe that anything like one-half of the professing Christians of today know what that test really means. “For to me to live is Christ.” If they truthfully wrote their own commentaries upon it, many of them would say, “We cannot say that. We never could be so enthusiastic or so fanatical as to say that.” And they would almost as soon give up their profession of Christianity as attempt to carry out that text as it ought to be carried out! Yet this is what we profess—and if we profess to live for God’s Glory and for the extension of Christ’s Kingdom, how can we do it except in God’s strength? And how will God give us His strength without also giving us His wisdom with which to use it? A man clothed with Divine energy, unaccompanied by Divine wisdom, would be one of the most dangerous persons in the whole world! A man who can speak so as to move the multitude and to stir the souls of men, is a very dangerous person unless piety fills his heart and the Grace of God controls his tongue. Suppose that man to have Divine power given to Him, as Judas had in a certain sense, but without the wisdom of God to guide him? We might as well have a devil on earth as have such a man as that! No, if we could succeed in attaining our avowed objective in life—the glorifying of God—we must enquire of Him!

II. Now I come to a second remark which is this. IF CHRISTIANS ASK GOD TO GUIDE THEM IN EVERYTHING THEY DO, THEY OUGHT TO SEE TO IT THAT THEY NEVER DO ANYTHING ABOUT WHICH THEY CANNOT ASK GOD’S GUIDANCE.

This Truth of God comes close to home to some people. For instance, *unlawful pleasures are manifestly forbidden to the Christian.* Those which the worldling may indulge in without any very great injury to himself are forbidden to the true Christian because he cannot enquire of the Lord about them. I have heard of people who say that they can go to the theater and yet are Christians. Well now, I would like somebody to write a form of prayer to be used by Christians in theatres, something to this effect—“O Lord, lead me not into temptation, but be pleased to bless the play tonight to my soul’s welfare. Grant that if it is Your will that I should die here, I may enter into eternal life having gone from the pleasures of this life to the pleasures that are to be hereafter!” If I were to write such a prayer as that, you would say, “Oh, that is shocking! It is shocking for anybody even to *think* of praying there!” Ah, it is shocking—not shocking to think of praying, but shocking to go where you *dare not pray!* Should a Christian ever be anywhere where he would be ashamed to die? I heard a lady once say that religion ought to be confined to places of worship and that it ought not to be talked about anywhere else. So I suggested to her

that we ought to have our places of worship made larger, for, of course, people would want religion when they came to die—so they had better die where religion would be in its proper place!

A Christian knows that he should not go to such places of amusement as worldlings frequent—they may go without any very great mischief, but he may not. He could not feed on the fare that is provided there, for it is not to his taste and, moreover, he would not go there because he could not expect to have communion with Christ there. And he could not ask God's blessing upon his going there. There are many amusements in the world—and you can always tell which are right and which are wrong by this text. You may do anything upon which you can ask God's blessing—but if you cannot ask God's blessing upon it, have nothing to do with it! If there are any things about which you have any doubt, leave them alone! Another man who has no doubt about the matter, may do without sin what you must not do if you have any doubt about it. If you feel, in your conscience, that you can expect the Lord's blessing and maintain communion with Christ in what you do, then you may do it. But if not, it is at your peril that you will do it.

Then there are *unlawful avocations in which Christians must not be engaged*. I could not ask the Lord's blessing if I were selling gin and other liquors all day long. I do not know how some men may feel, but if I had pocketed the fools' pence, I could not pray, "Lord, be pleased to guide me where I shall open the next devil's-house and set traps to catch poor drinking men." I should expect, if I went to ask God's guidance about that matter, that I should receive a very sharp rebuke from Him for having the impudence to ask Him about any such thing! There are also other trades and employments which you must not touch, as you know that they are so beset with evil customs that you cannot ask the Lord's blessing upon them. I am sure that man up in the gallery did not ask the Lord to bless him when he was taking his shutters down this morning—and as he could not ask God's blessing upon it, he ought not to have done it! There are some of you here who still have your shops open. Your daughter hates the business, but she is chained to the counter while you are here. How can you come to the House of God and yet violate the Day of God? Have you any conscience or have you drugged it to sleep? If you should have your house full of silver and gold gained by such trading as that, it will be a curse to you and a curse to your children—and to your children's children! It is a curse to have that which has not God's blessing upon it—and ill-gotten gains never can have it. Old Hard-Fists cannot ask God's blessing upon his action when he takes his brother by the throat, and says, "Pay me what you owe, even to the uttermost farthing." And the man who grinds down the poor needlewomen who work for him cannot ask God's blessing—neither can the man who pays his employees barely enough to get a crust of bread, yet spreads out his money and says, "Thank God that He has given me wealth!" No, the curse of the Almighty rests upon them and God will one day avenge the

blood of those whom they have cruelly put to death that they might increase their ill-gotten gains!

I pray you, members of this Church, and members of Christ's body everywhere, touch nothing upon which you cannot ask God's blessing! The moment you perceive that God cannot be consulted about a thing, turn your back upon it and say, "Let those who mean to damn their souls do the devil's work! But a Christian must not and will not touch it." I am aware that in my saying these things, I may strike some persons who are engaged in trades which they conduct lawfully. My censure is not intended for those persons who, though in a trade which I might not choose, yet do their best to conduct it honorably. Still, I would make the censure as sweeping as it ought to be, for there are far too many men merely for gain following that which they know is damnable—and must in the end ruin their own souls!

I think this rule may help guide you through life—Do nothing upon which you cannot ask God's blessing. Young woman, if you can ask the Lord's blessing upon your contemplated marriage, you may enter upon it. Young man, if you can ask the Lord's blessing upon the taking of that new shop, you may do it. You who already have plenty of business and who now give some of your time to God's cause, but who know that if you take that next shop, you cannot continue to do so, ought not to give up the service of God's House in order to increase your worldly business. I am not always sorry when men do not get on in business as fast as they wish, for I remember the case of good Jehoshaphat who "made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not, for they were broken at Eziongeber." And a great mercy that they were, for if they had gone and had brought the gold to the king, I do not know what Jehoshaphat might have done with it! Was it not Mr. Cecil, who, on hearing that one of his friends had come in for a great deal of money, went to sympathize with him and to pray for him, "under the trying circumstances"? Doubtless, the more a man has, the more is he tempted not to use it rightly. And while it is, in some senses, a high privilege to have wealth, yet it involves such solemn responsibilities that a man should never have it without enquiring of God how he can rightly use it.

III. Now, thirdly, THIS DIVINE GUIDANCE IS AS NECESSARY, NOW, AS IT EVER WAS, AND IT IS NECESSARY IN ALL THINGS.

Some people say, "Yes, we believe that the Lord's guidance would be a great blessing to us, and that it is our duty to seek it. But how can we get it? There is no priest to whom we can go for direction and we cannot go to our minister and say, 'What shall we do?' He is not able to give us the Infallible answer we need." Your minister does not wish to do it, for he thinks he is better employed in preaching the Gospel to you and giving you Infallible directions concerning your immortal souls! I certainly do not approve of the practice by which some people say they can tell the Lord's will by just opening the Bible and noticing the first text which catches their eye. I know that Mr. Wesley frequently practiced this plan, but, like some other good men, he had his faults and I know that others have imitated him. But I should think myself no more

justified in seeking guidance in that way than I should in shuffling a pack of cards! I could no more expect to be guided by a text of Scripture, picked out in that haphazard style, than by a Norwood Gypsy. No, no! We are above all that kind of thing!

How, then, does God guide His people? Well, there are several ways which are very clear, and the first is, *God guides them by His Word*. I will suppose there is a young woman here who is contemplating marriage and she wants to know whether it would be right. She turns to her Bible and she finds this text—"Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The young man in question is an unbeliever, so she does not need to turn to any other passage of Scripture, for this one is decisive. If she really wants to know God's will, here it is—and she could not have it more clearly even if God were to flash it in lightning across the sky, or roll it out in tones of thunder! This is the way plainly marked out for her and I would that she and all other young Christians—before they ruin their prospects, before they bring upon themselves lifelong misery—would hear the voice of God saying to them, "Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The case is as plain as possible. Nobody need be consulted. You need not go to friends. You need not come to me and ask, "What ought I do?" If you are disobedient and are afterwards made miserable, it is nothing more than you ought to expect. I single that case out because it happens to be one that often comes up, especially in a large congregation like the present, with so many in it who are young. And here, I say, God's Word becomes a faithful and unerring guide!

I have heard of a poor Christian man who was in great difficulty. One day, when his wife and children were almost starving, and were shivering with cold, and he had nothing with which to make a fire, the devil said to him, "Your rich neighbor has a good stack of wood and you may go and take some of it, for the Bible says that, "all things are yours." He was going to take it, but, all of a sudden, that old command came into his mind, "You shall not steal." That was quite enough for him—he did not need anything else. He turned back at once, for God's Word was to him a sufficient guide.

The next guidance is *our own spiritual profit and God's Glory*. You need to know whether you shall move to such-and-such a town. Well, is there a good Evangelical minister there? Can you hear the Word to profit in that town? If not, unless there are some very strong reasons why you should go there, you ought to remain where your soul can be best profited. A man would often be better off with less earnings where he could hear a faithful minister than with more money in a place where the Gospel is not preached! Ask the question, too, "Can I serve God there?" If you cannot, what right have you to go there? If you have to give up a sphere of usefulness and there is no other sphere open to you, then pause. You will always know which way to go if you have this compass in your hand, for it will always point you to the right pole. And if you use it,

you will always be guided to the paths of righteousness—Can I serve God there? Will my soul be in a more healthy state if I go there?

Then another way of guidance is *by the leadings of Divine Providence*. This is nothing as clear as the rules I have already given you, because when you want to do a thing, you can always find a Providence which seems to be in favor of it. It is remarkable how many ministers leave salaries of £200 a year in places where they might still have been comfortable and useful, to go where they would get £250 a year—they have said it was Providence—but it is equally remarkable how very few of them ever move from £250 to £200. I have but little faith in “Providence” of this sort! I believe in Divine Providence, but I do not always believe in what people speak of as Providence. They say, “There is such-and-such a thing. I know it is not quite right, but I would like to have it. And then, you see, there is so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so, and—it looks quite like Providence.” Nonsense! God’s Providence never permits you to do wrong! But when you wish to act for the Glory of God, a path cleared before you and an open door will help you to feel that you are being Infallibly led by the Providence and the Word of God—and by His Spirit in your heart.

Beside this, I think that *young people would do well to seek advice from experienced and consistent Christian friends*. By stating their difficulty, it may be that God’s servant will be helped to tell them just what they need and, often, you may receive through the lips of a preacher who knows nothing of your case, guidance from God. Many and many a time have I seen this to be the case! God has told the preacher what to say about a certain person’s case although he did not even know who the person was to whom he was unconsciously speaking—and who was rightly guided by what the preacher was moved to say.

Sometime, too, but rarely, *God guides us by very vivid impressions*. I have seen so much of people who have been impressed this way and that way, and the other way, that I do not believe in impressions except in certain cases. I was once in conversation with two friends, one of whom was guided by his judgment, while the other was swayed by impressions, and I could not help noting that the man who was guided by impressions was, as such people will always be, “unstable as water.” If I am impressed in one way one day, I may be impressed in another way the next day, so impressions are unreliable guides. There was a young man who was impressed with the idea that he ought to preach for me one Lord’s-Day. But as I was not impressed to let him do so, he lost out and probably will continue to lose out for some little time! He had no gifts of speech, but he thought his impression was quite sufficient. When I receive a similar impression, the Revelation will be a proper one and you will have the pleasure of listening to his voice, but certainly not before that!

Occasionally, impressions do guide a man right. A Quaker, one night, could not sleep and he had a very strong impression that he must get up and saddle and mount his horse. He did so and rode along the streets, his horse’s hoofs noisily clattering in the silence of the night. He did not

know where he was to go, but there was a light in one house, and something seemed to say to him, "This is the house to which you are to go." He dismounted and knocked at the door. A man came down and asked why he was there at that time of night. "Perhaps, Friend," answered the Quaker, "you can tell me, for I do not know, but I have been moved to come here." "I can tell you, indeed," said the man, with much emotion, and he took him upstairs and showed him a short halter with which he was about to hang himself when the Quaker came to his door! Such strong impressions are not to be despised and I have no doubt that highly spiritual minds do become like the photographer's sensitive plate and receive impressions. What another man may be a fool for talking of, such men may truly speak of, for God does sometimes reveal His will in that way.

IV. And now, to close, let me say that WHEN WE HAVE RECEIVED COUNSEL FROM GOD ABOUT ANYTHING, LET US ACT ACCORDING TO IT.

If you go and ask God about anything, do not, as some people do when they consult their minister, make up your mind beforehand as to what you will do. But having consulted your God and learned what is His will, mind that you do it. If all the devils in Hell stand in your way, mind that you do it. If friends oppose and foes assail you, still do it. There may be a point on which I differ from you, but I shall do what I believe is right and shall not hesitate, whoever may oppose. When God moves us, we are not to be turned aside by any man's words, or by a thousand men's words. If once we have, "Thus says the Lord," we must and will go on over the mountains and through the seas if God so wills it.

I will finish with an instance of what I mean. There was a missionary, who is still living, who had given himself to God's cause and had gone out without purse or scrip, simply depending on the bounty of Heaven. He was called, in the Providence of God, to go in a vessel to one of the guano islands where a great number of ships were congregated to take away that valuable manure. He found very little opportunity of serving his Master for some time until a mutiny broke out on the island. The mariners rebelled. They fought with the men employed in moving the manure and the most fearful scenes ensued—the men being drunk from morning till night. The ship-masters did not know what to do, but at last they sent for one of Her Majesty's men-of-war. It came and when the captain had landed with the marines, he told the mutineers that unless they submitted at once, he would fire upon them. They appeared to be very humble and seemed to be subdued at once. The vessel could not stay long, for she was looking out for slavers on the African coast, and as soon as the ship was out of sight, the mutineers were as wild and ferocious as they were before.

There was one man there—no very extraordinary man in his own esteem—he sits behind me now. He was the missionary of whom I spoke. He felt in his heart that he had a call from God to speak to those men, so he begged the captain to send him on shore in a boat. But the captain

said he was not such a fool, for the missionary would be killed directly. He asked again, but received a similar refusal. He found another captain and persuaded him to plead his cause and, at last, after much talking, it was agreed that he should go, though the captain said, "You will surely not go and preach the Gospel to those devils—they ought to be hung, everyone of them." The missionary said that he felt that God had called him to do it and he would go. So he was rowed ashore and down came these fiends in human shape to meet him. He felt some little apprehension, but he was sure that he was doing the right thing. He had asked counsel of God and he knew that God would help him, so he pulled out of his pocket a Bethel flag.

The great, rough fellows came crowding round him, but, holding up the Bethel flag, he began talking to them as if he had been the coolest and most collected man in the world, though I expect his heart was beating fast all the time. He said, "My good fellows, they tell me that you are like devils, that you won't work, and that it is no use for me to come to talk to you. But I believe that some of you had pious mothers who used to teach you the Gospel. And I know that when you were in England, you were not what you are now. Besides, I have heard you sing your songs and I should like you to sing with me now." Then he gave out the hymn—

***"O God of Bethel by whose hand
Your people still are fed
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Have all our fathers led."***

After they had sung the hymn, he went on talking to them. And when some big fellows, a little way off, looked as though they were meditating mischief, he pointed to them and said, "If any of you attempt to disturb me, there are plenty of good fellows round me who will stop you, so you had better come and listen to what I have to say." The men came near and he preached to them with fervency and power—and his Master's blessing was upon him, for, the next day, all the men were at their work again—and many of them were ready to do as they had done in their better days! And what Her Majesty's ship, with so many guns, could not do, the poor preacher's word did, for it turned the lions into lambs!

Whenever any of you have anything to do which you know is right, do it! After you have enquired of God, do not stop to consult friends, but go and do it! Take your sling and your stone and, in God's name, sling the stone into the giant's forehead and, like David, come back victorious, for that shall be your last answer to those who would persuade you not to do it! Never ask God to guide you and then, when He says, "This is the way," stand still, and say, "That way is too hard, too stern, too difficult, I will not walk in it." Go forward, for, if Hell, itself, were before you, God would divide it even as he divided the Red Sea for His ancient people! Only have faith in God, for "all things are possible to him who believes." There is one short message that God gives for guidance to everyone of us and more especially to you who are not converted! It is this, "Seek you My face." This very moment, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for, "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of

salvation!” When you have taken God’s advice concerning your poor soul’s eternal welfare. When you have believed in Jesus to the salvation of your soul—then go to Him about your temporal concerns and about everything—and you will then be able to say, with the Psalmist, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 63.**

“A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah.”

Shall we praise God in the garden and not praise him in the wilderness? No! We will sing a new song when we come into the desert, for, even if we are in a desert, that is no reason why there should be a desert in us, so let us praise God even in our wilderness experience!

Verse 1. *O God.* Two very solemn words. Never use them, I pray you, as hasty, thoughtless expressions. God’s name must never be taken in vain. I fear that there are some who do this and are not rebuked for it. When we say, “O God,” there ought to be something solemn to follow.

1. *You are my God.* The second word, “God,” signifies, “my strong one, my mighty one, to whom I can bring all my weakness and all my care; for You are strong enough to take care of me even in the wilderness.”

1. *Early will I seek You.* That is, “at once.” “I will not delay, but immediately will I seek You. I will not so much seek to get out of the wilderness, or seek for comfort in the wilderness, as seek for everything in You.”

1. *My soul thirsts for You.* This is a blessed experience. It is a sad thing to be without God in any degree, but it is a blessed thing when we cannot rest without Him.

1. *My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.* “My flesh”—that lowest part of me—even that has been awakened and quickened! “My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.” “Where there is no water, no well, no cloud, no rain, I am longing for You, my God.” “My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is”

2. *To see Your power and Your Glory, so as I have seen You in the sanctuary.* David remembers better times that he had enjoyed in the past and he longs to have them back. He wants again to know, and feel, and enjoy all he has ever known, and felt and enjoyed. And, blessed be God, He will grant us that gift!

3, 4. *Because Your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live.* “Whether I live in a sterile wilderness or in a fertile land, I will bless You while I live.”

4. *I will lift up my hands in Your name.* “I will pluck up my spirit. I will begin to pray. I will begin to work. I will look toward Heaven—I will lift up my hands in Your name.”

5. *My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.* There is everything that is satisfactory in

God. If we do but enjoy His Presence, we cannot lack anything. Are we not put, as it were, into Heaven itself when we are brought near to God? Are we not willing to remain for a while on earth and to stay out of Heaven, if we may but have the Lord with us and constantly enjoy His company?

6. *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches.* When one is living near to God, he is not afraid of sleeplessness. He would be glad of the rest that sleep brings, but if he cannot sleep, he finds a sweeter rest in God! I remarked, one day, to one who lives very near to God, that it was a weary and sad thing to lie sleepless. And he said to me something that stuck by me. "I do not think so," he said, "for when I wake in the night, my Heavenly Father talks so sweetly to me that I do not want to go back to sleep. And when He does not want to speak to me, I speak to Him in prayer, and so the hours glide away most happily."

7. *Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.* "If I cannot look up and see the light of Your face, the very shade of Your wings shall make me glad, and I will sing like a nightingale in the dark."

8. *My soul follows hard after You.* The Hebrew is, "My soul is glued to You." "I am like a dog that keeps close to his master's heels and will not leave him."

8. *Your right hand upholds me.* We could not follow the Lord if His hand were not still underneath us to keep us going.

9, 10. *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.* The jackal is the creature meant here, for he haunts the battlefield and devours the slain. So it came to pass with many of David's foes. They fell in battle and the wild beasts devoured them.

11. *But the king shall rejoice in God: everyone that swears by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.* If they cannot be stopped by reason or by repentance, they shall be stopped with a shovelful of earth, for God will stop the mouths of all liars in one way or another.

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

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“NOW THEN, DO IT”

NO. 1375

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1877,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“You sought for David in times past to be king over you: now then, do it: for the Lord has spoken of David, saying, By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.”
2 Samuel 3:17, 18.

You know the circumstances under which these words were spoken. God had cast off Saul because he had not been faithful and He had appointed David to be his successor, anointing him by the hand of Samuel. Yet when Saul was slain in battle, Israel seemed determined to choose her own king by selecting one of Saul’s family—and under the leadership of Abner, the majority of the tribes set up Ishbosheth, son of Jonathan, to be king. Then commenced a civil war between the two parties and we read that the house of David waxed stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. In process of time Abner, the commander-in-chief and prime minister who was at the head of Saul’s party, because it served his own purposes, changed his mind and resolved that David should become king over the whole land.

Having so resolved, he began to persuade the tribes and argue with them on David’s behalf. And the words of my text are a part of a very powerful argument which he used in order to induce them to give up the king of their own choosing and offer the crown to the king whom God had appointed, even David. I need say but very little, however, about the circumstances of the case, for I am about to accommodate the words to quite another people and another king. I desire, in all sincerity of heart, to approach those of *you* whose minds are ruled by evil desires and motives, all of which are alien sovereigns, hostile to the true King whom God has anointed—and to remind you, this morning, that you have, in times past, sought to have Jesus to be King over you.

Perhaps you have some desires towards Him lingering in your heart even now and, therefore, I have hope of you that you will go further, and in all sincerity, submit yourselves to His dominion. It is time that you should go beyond mere desires and attain to something practical. In the words of Abner I would say to you, “Now then, do it.” If worth desiring, it is worth performing. “Now then, do it.” There are the best of reasons why you should do it, for Jesus is God’s appointed King, anointed by the Holy Spirit, by whom alone He will save you from your spiritual enemies. May God grant that His Word be successful, through His Divine Spirit, in establishing the Kingdom of Christ in many undecided hearts, this morning, and He shall have the praise!

The text gives me the following run of thought. First, I would remind you of former impulses—“You sought for David in times past to be king over you.” Secondly, I would recommend decided action—“Now then, do it.” And thirdly, I would reason with a forcible argument for, only changing names, I may read my text in this fashion, “The Lord has spoken of Jesus, saying, By the hand of My only begotten Son I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the powers of darkness, and out of the hand of all their enemies.”

I. First, then, my business this morning is to REMIND UNDECIDED PERSONS OF FORMER IMPULSES. I would personally address each hesitating hearer and call up the memories of His life. You are not a Christian, but many times you have been upon the verge of it, for you have even gone the length of seeking, after a fashion, to have Jesus for your King. Of course the character and frequency of those impulses have varied greatly in different individuals. Each man has had his own amount of drawings and inclinings towards God. I cannot so speak as to describe all at once and, therefore, I must go into particulars.

Many of you have been tutored in the ways and manners of the godly from your youth up. The very first song you heard your mother sing, as she hushed you to sleep, was sweetened with the name of Jesus. Probably you cannot recollect a time when there were not some holy agencies at work upon your heart. And you remember the effect they had upon you, even at the very beginning, when as a child your little prayers at night grew fervent and you sobbed yourself to sleep with grief for having done wrong. Often did your childish heart sigh after, “gentle Jesus,” and long for His love. I think I see those tears upon your little cheeks even now, when you had lately heard the story of Jesus, or had been earnestly addressed concerning death and judgment to come. When the sweetness and beauty of Christ and the happiness of Believers were set before you in your youth, you often felt drawn to the Cross of Christ.

Nor was it in childhood, alone, for as you grew older there were agencies adapted for your growth prepared by infinite love. Some of you fell into the hands of sincere Christian men and women who did not cease to instruct you and to warn you. And sometimes, as you must remember if you will but try to do so, you were like Agrippa of old, “almost persuaded to be a Christian.” You promised, you resolved, you began even to pray, but, alas, your goodness was as the morning cloud, as the early dew and soon passed away. But you do remember, don’t you, that it was there? Since then, though you have been immersed in business cares, you have not been altogether without some thoughts towards Jesus the Savior.

An earnest sermon has driven you home to your knees. Affliction has frequently compelled you solemnly to consider. The death of others has made you pause and forced you to hopeful resolves. Can you count up the many times in which you have come to a dead halt and have raised the question, “Shall I go further or shall I turn?” Your soul has been half constrained to say within herself, “Things shall be altered. I will no longer be an ungrateful child to my good God, but I will arise and go to my Father.”

Why, there are some of you to whom continuance in rebellion must have been very difficult, for you have had to stifle and almost to *strangle* conscience! If you do not see, it is because you have laid your fingers heavily upon your eyelids to keep out the light—if you have not heard, it has been because you have stopped your ears till they have become dull of hearing.

The knock at your door by your Lord’s pierced hand has been kept up year after year, almost incessantly, and even in the night watches you have been startled with it. He whose head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night, has stood there these many weary months knocking, knocking, knocking! In boundless patience of love He still lingers and again lifts that scarred hand to knock again in tender earnestness. You have been almost persuaded to rise from the couch of your sloth to admit Him to your heart, but as yet you have not done so. You sought for David to be king over you in times past, some of you, but, alas, you have not crowned him yet.

There are others among you who have not been so highly favored with religious advantages. Some of you, perhaps, come of an ungodly household and your bringing up has been apart from the things of God. I grieve to say that this is getting more frequent daily, especially in our great cities. Children, nowadays, are not trained to the observance of the Sabbath as they were! Multitudes in this great city seldom tread the floor of God’s House at all. Still, I can scarcely imagine that there is one present but who has, at times, enjoyed holy impulses, right convictions and pure desires. Conscience, though not enlightened as we could have wished, has not been quite quit with you—you have felt uneasy in your unconverted state and you are uneasy now.

You have been forced, sometimes, to think, and when a man who is without God and without Christ begins to *think*, his thoughts must trouble him and, being troubled, he is likely to desire the way of peace. I cannot but believe that you who are thoughtful have sometimes had intense desires to be Christians. You have longed to be pardoned, renewed and sanctified. Would you not give all that you have for a sure hope of Heaven? You know that occasionally, at least, pure aspirations have come over you—and I wish that I could, by any means, so revive your memories that you would all confess that you sought for Jesus in times past to be King over you!

If you remember these things, I beg you, also, to consider that your responsibilities have been increased in proportion to those impulses, for every time you have checked conscience, or have held yourself back when you were moved towards right, you have not only incurred a present sin, but you have rendered all your future life the more censurable! The more difficult it is to persevere in an evil course, the more intensely sinful that perseverance becomes! So that I must charge upon some here present that every day in which they live without repentance and without faith is a day of aggravated iniquity, seeing that they resist the Holy Spirit as did, also, their fathers!

You love darkness rather than light because your deeds are evil. None are so blamable for ignorance as those who refuse to learn and none so guilty in their sins as those who resist better impulses and do violence to themselves in order to indulge their iniquities. The case varies, however, as we have already seen. These impulses have been usual in you at certain times and these find a parallel in the case of Israel. The tribes desired David for king on certain occasions. For instance, whenever Saul was more than ordinarily oppressive, they sighed for the son of Jesse who was of a gentler mold. Whenever sin begins to be oppressive to a man, he has, for the present, some wish to escape from its tyranny. Sin is a very hard taskmaster, especially some forms of it.

Let a man pursue the sin of drunkenness and, “who has woe? Who has redness of eyes” like he does? Let a man follow the lusts of the flesh and his very body soon begins to smart beneath the lash of his despotic vices. Even now the earnest of sin’s wage is something dreadful for a man to receive! Have you ever seen a spendthrift brought to beggary and rags? Do you wonder that when his hungry belly accuses him, he promises better things and, in a measure, is sincere in his good resolves? Selfishness, itself, calls upon men to quit their evil ways which are ruining them body and soul! It is not at all amazing that so loud and near a voice should, for a time, be heard!

Some of you know well when it has been so, when your sin has lost its pleasurable, when the beaded bubbles of frothy joy have disappeared from the cup of sin and it has become stale and flat—then you have seen the hollowness of the world and cried, “I would gladly be a Christian!” These Israelites, perhaps, in their hearts sought for David to be king when they saw the joy upon the face of David’s men. His troops often had spoil to share and they always spoke well of their captain. And whenever one of David’s men was seen anywhere about Judah or Israel, the people said, “Those warriors have a goodly heritage in being under such a noble leader”—and they wished they had such a king, themselves!

I do not doubt but sometimes when you hear Christ preached in all His sweetness, your mouths begin to water after Him! “Is He so good, is He so pleasant? Oh, that we knew Him!” And when you see Christians so happy and especially when you see them in times of trouble so cheerful and joyous under all their trials, I know you have had an inward wish that you knew their secret and could share their peace. Has not it been so? When you saw your mother die, did you not wish you had her Savior to soften your pillow as He softened hers? When that dear little child of yours who loved the Savior sang of Jesus as she departed, you almost wished that you could die with her if you might as cheerfully meet the Lord! Well, those were times when you sought David to be king over you in days past.

I want, if I can, to bring them all up afresh. Perhaps if they would all revive at once and come again, God might bless them and make the united impulse strong enough, by His good Spirit, to carry you over the frontier into the Kingdom of Christ. The Israelites, no doubt, often wished that David had been king when they saw their enemies gradually en-

croaching upon their territory and threatening to subdue them. They sighed and said, “Oh, for an hour of David with his sling and his stone. In the name of the Lord he brought down the haughty Philistine. O that he were to the front again! Saul has fallen on the mountains and Jonathan is slain upon his high places, and we, the people of the Lord, are trod down by the uncircumcised! Oh for the son of Jesse, once again, to lead our armies forth to successful war!”

Have you not, also, when you have seen the strength of your growing sins and contemplated the ruin which they will bring upon you, longed for a Deliverer? When you have perceived what sin will surely bring upon you, by-and-by, in another world and how, even now, it holds you in bondage, have you not wished for a Savior, yes, wished for the Christ of God to come and destroy your sins and overthrow Satan and set you free? I am sure you must have had such wishes when sickness has made death appear to be approaching, when judgment has begun to be realized and the terrors of wrath to come! You thought of Jesus in times past to be King over you. And have you not, also, like Israel, often longed for your true King that you might, at last, find rest?

The civil war must have inflicted much misery upon the nation and, therefore, the people wished the strife to be ended through David’s being made king. So, too, you wish that your heart were peaceful and quiet, for now you are ill at ease. You love your pleasurable sins, but you are not easy in them. The bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself upon and you know it! You wish that you enjoyed the solid peace, the confidence and satisfaction which Believers possess! But you know that you cannot have it apart from Christ and this reflection has sometimes made you seek Christ, after your fashion, though, alas, it has not lasted long enough to produce real allegiance to Him! I think it right to remind you of these past feelings. How I wish they would come back and rise to practical results. May the Holy Spirit renew them in a deeper form than in the past, that you may, at once, with eagerness, go forth and salute your King—the King who wore a crown of thorns for your sake!

These seekings after David were sometimes vivid and strong with the Israelites and so, too, impulses with undecided people are occasionally very powerful. Though they do not actually lay hold on Eternal Life, they have strong desires to do so. They go beyond empty wishes and seriously sigh for an interest in Jesus—and yet they pause there and go no further. The bud becomes a tiny fruit and then withers from the tree. I have known unconverted people to feel great terror at the thought of remaining unsaved. Under this influence they have gone to their knees and begun to pray. They have gone to their Bibles and begun to read. They have attended the House of God with great regularity and listened with very solemn attention—and they have even gone the length of mending their ways in many points!

They have begun to frequent Prayer Meetings and, for a while, it did seem as if Jesus would be King over them! Indeed, we hoped that they were already the servants of the Lord, but, alas, our hopes were disap-

pointed—they turned back and walked no more with us. Oftentimes the impulses which are put aside and stamped out by half-awakened men are exceedingly difficult to overcome. Some of you have had to exert yourselves fearfully to remain as you are. You have needed help of the world, the flesh and the devil to overpower the force which held you, for a while, in its grasp. Some men battle for damnation with a greater force than others strive after Eternal Life! The way of transgressors is sometimes hard, in this sense, that they find it difficult to continue as they are—they are so persecuted by the persuasions, warnings and entreaties of good men—and their conscience is so alarmed as to give them little or no rest.

Alas, their neck is as an iron sinew and they are set on mischief! And despite the inward calls which bid them seek Jesus for their King, they turn a deaf ear to the most tender wooing and continue as they were—but not without an awful increase of guilt. Listen to me, you who are described in the language I have used! Listen and learn wisdom! Nothing has come of all the seekings of your youth and your later days. You sought for David in times past to be king over you, but nothing has come of it! Nothing has come of it even to this day. You saw that religion was right—you did not argue to the contrary! You admitted all its reasons! You yielded your understanding so far that you would even defend the Truth of God against opponents!

But what of all that? To admit a thing to be right is but a small part of the matter, if you practically deny it by your indifference. You have wished that you were a Christian—you have wished it hundreds of times, but this, also, is vanity, if carried no further. “If wishes were horses beggars would ride” and so, if wishes were Graces the careless would be saved. You know, too, that you went beyond wishing—you *regretted* that you were not already decided—you felt very much ashamed of yourself for having resisted so long. If anybody had told you that you would be hesitating, now, you would not have believed it. Ten years ago, if anyone had said, “In ten years’ time you will be sitting in the Tabernacle just as undecided as you used to be,” you would have replied with indignation, “Is your servant a dog? I shall never be so foolish.”

But it is even *worse*, for now you do not feel half so much as you once did. You were more impressible years ago than you are now and, speaking after the manner of men, you are now far less likely to be saved. You know it is so and yet you did at that time, after a fashion, pray and, after a sort, you were in earnest. But what of all that? Nothing has come of it! Will anything *ever* come of it? The Israelites might talk about making David king, but that would not crown him. They might meet together and say they wished it were so, but that would not *do* it. It might be generally admitted that he ought to be monarch and it might even be earnestly hoped that one day he would be—but that would not do it—something more decided must be done.

And oh, am I not, indeed, hitting the very center of the target when I say of some of you that you have, scores of times, given up the whole question as a matter of argument? Yes, and your heart has submitted that

it was wrong of you to continue as you are! And you have been moved with strong resolutions towards repentance and faith and yet you are the same as ever and not one inch closer to salvation! You are still in darkness, still under the dominion of Satan, still the slave of sin and so, I fear, you will be in 10 more years! And so you will be to the end of life—and so forever and forever! May God grant that my words may not be prophetic concerning any one of you, but that you may, this very day, be moved by the Eternal Spirit to take decided action through His Grace. “Now then, *do it.*”

II. I therefore pass on to the second part, to RECOMMEND DECIDED ACTION. “You sought for David in times past to be king over you, now then, *do it.*” No longer stand thinking, questioning, hesitating, halting—but now then, *do it!* Do one thing or the other! If God is God, serve Him! If Baal is God or the devil is God, serve him. Do not sit down forever in this absurd condition of believing a thing to be right and yet neglecting it—of feeling yourself to be in danger and not seeking to escape by the way which you admit to be safe and fitting! Come, now, to something like honest dealing with yourself and with your Lord.

Note the business on hand—it is that Jesus should be King over you. It was necessary that David should become king, or else he could not rescue Israel from the Philistines and, in your case, Jesus must be King or He cannot be your Savior. Thousands of people are quite willing to be saved by Christ, but when it comes to the first step, namely, that Jesus must be accepted as Ruler, Lawgiver, Master, King and Lord, then they start back and reject Eternal Life—

***“Yet know (nor of the terms complain),
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign!
To reign, and with no partial sway—
Thoughts must be slain that disobey.”***

The whole question of your being saved or lost will turn on this—if Jesus is not your King, then the devil will remain enthroned in your heart—and you will remain a lost soul! But if your heart will yield itself up to the supreme authority of King Jesus, then the work of salvation has already commenced and Jesus will take care to purge your nature of all His enemies until you shall be an empire in which He, alone, shall reign in holiness and peace! Jesus must be king! What do you say, Sir, Madame—shall it be so? Do you hesitate about it? He must be your Lord and Master. *His* will must be *your* will. His commands must be law to you and His example must, from now on, be the model of your life. Do you disagree, or will you yield at once?

Next, notice that if Christ is to be your King, it must be by your own act and deed. So says the text concerning King David—“Now then, *do it.*” David would not be king over Israel unless Israel was willing that he should be king. And our Lord Jesus Christ is no forced monarch over one single human heart—the promise is, “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power.” The Kingdom of Christ over men’s hearts is a kingdom of love, not a kingdom of force! There must be the full assent and consent

of the will to the reigning power of Christ in the soul or else He does not reign at all! What do you say—yes, or no? Are you willing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should, from now on, rule and reign over your entire nature as your heart’s supreme Lord?

That is the question! Let it be settled once and for all! You have sometimes sought to have it so, “now then, *do it.*” And here is the point, if Jesus is to reign, the old king must go down! It is of no use trying to have Ishbosheth and David on the throne at the same time. It is impossible to serve sin and to serve Christ! Favorite and constitutional sins must be relinquished. I know many persons who say that they are under concern of soul whose sincerity I more than question, because they continue in known sin—and yet they complain that they cannot find peace! How can they? If you meet with a person who drinks, on the sly, and is frequently half intoxicated. If you hear him say that he cannot find rest in Christ, do you wonder?

Do you not think that he is a hypocrite? How can men and women continually fuddle themselves with drink and yet hope to be children of God? Give up your abominable tippling! Do you think Christ is going to save sots and let them continue to make beasts of themselves? To prate about being saved and in secret worship the bottle is clear lying and next door to blasphemy! Talk about having a Savior and continue to get drunk? I marvel that you do not perish like Ananias and Sapphira! Another man is carrying on his trade in a way which is dishonest and yet he whines and cants about not finding peace with God. Do not his own words condemn him? What has he to do with *peace*? How can he continue in sin and yet be saved from sin? Oh, Sirs, be not deceived! Your sins and you must part or Jesus will have nothing to do with you!

Do you think so badly of my Lord as to dream that He will pander to your passions by giving you liberty to live in sin and yet go to Heaven? For shame! Has Christ come to play the lackey to your lusts and let you do the work of Satan and then receive the wages of the godly? Oh no! There must be a clean sweep of the false to make room for the true! We must have no Ishbosheth if David is to be king! Though you may not attain perfection, yet in your *desires* you must be perfect—you must, from your heart, put away every single sin—no matter of what shape it may be or however pleasurable or painful it may appear. Off must come the right arms and out must go the right eyes! It were better for you to enter into life maimed and blind than that you should perish in your transgressions. The main point, however, is to *do it*—really and at once make Christ Jesus your King! And to this end we must believe in Him or trust Him.

It is this trusting Jesus Christ which is the essential point, for out of it grows the *repentance* which renounces every false way. When a man fully and honestly trusts Christ with his soul, he is enabled, from that time forward, to hate the sin which he once loved and so he wins the mastery over it. He finds a joy in submitting to the holy reign of Jesus because he has already trusted Him and believes that he is saved. But, alas, many of you do not believe! Indeed you would not be persuaded to believe though

one rose from the dead! How many times have I spoken from this platform to some of you about this matter? How many times have you wished and resolved and all that?

We have had enough of this trifling! This morning I would push you on to a decision and address you in these words—“Now then, do it! NOW THEN, DO IT!” You reply that you wish you could. Away with your wishes—“Now then, do it!” “But,” you say—out with your “buts!” DO IT! “But, Sir”—I say again, no more of your, “but, Sirs!” DO IT! DO IT, and DO IT NOW! The blessed and eternal Spirit who has brought you to this point, this morning, and who urges me to press this question upon you waits to help you. When your whole soul wills to do it, He will be with you and you *will* do it—and Christ shall be enthroned in your hearts to reign there forever!

I fear that many do not mean to do it, at any rate not just now. They will not say, “No,” but they hesitate and that is much the same thing. O, my Friend, the day will come when God will take your hesitation for a final negative! I believe it often happens to men that though they have not deliberately said, “No,” yet having no heart for the Gospel and only trifling with God by pretences, they mean to obey Him by-and-by. But He has, at last, taken the meaning of their delay and regarded it as final rejection and left them to themselves so that they have perished in their sin. I beseech you, delay no more, but, “now then, *do it.*”

The sooner it is done the better. Until the deed is done, remember, you are undone! Till Christ is accepted by you as King. Till sin is hated and Jesus is trusted, you are under another king. Whatever you may think of it, the *devil* is your master! You say you do not like him, but he is your master and lord, for all that, since he leads you captive at his will. Till Jesus reigns in your heart, you are, also, in the utmost danger—in danger of death and eternal punishment! Let your breath go the wrong way, or let your heart cease beating just for a little—and you will be in Hell! My Friends, you will be in HELL! You who sought for Jesus in times past, you who felt those good desires, you, the beloved child of Christian parents, you the earnest hearer at the House of God, you who are fond of sermons, but are, I fear, sermon-hardened—you, even you—will sink down to Hell with all those privileges like millstones about your neck!

“Well, Sir, I will think about it.” Under cover of that promise there lurks delay and that is exactly what I am afraid of. Do not so much think, as ACT. “Now then, do it.” I beseech you to make serious and immediate business of it! Perhaps if it is not done at this moment, it never will be done. For all these long years nothing has been actually done—though so much has been proposed—and this mainly because of your perpetual delays. What has come of all your fine resolutions? What is the good of a mere resolve? A man resolves that he will be industrious, but if he continues to lie on the bed of the sluggard, is he any more thrifty? A man is sick and resolves to take medicine, but leaves it untasted—is he benefited by his *intention*? A man resolves to go on a journey, but does not take the

trouble to get into the public conveyance, or to use his limbs—what progress does he make? Does he not abide just where he was?

All this bears upon your case! You know it does! All this, while Jesus is being rejected! We do not sufficiently think of the dishonor done to Jesus by base delays. All the while that Israel did not accept David as king, David was being badly treated. He who fought the Philistines for them. He whose valor was Israel's right arm, whose band of men was the sword and shield of the nation against the Philistines was being kept away from his rightful throne, his merits forgotten, his claims ignored. Soul, by refusing Him His Throne, you are treating Jesus badly! Your wavering between two opinions is setting Him in rivalry with foul sin and a base world—and upon you daily guilt is coming—a guilt which grows thicker and blacker as time rolls on.

Think of your previous impulses and as you consider them, answer me this question—were they wrong? When, in your childhood, you felt such strong desires after Christ, were they not commendable desires? Why, then, do you not carry them out? If you were wrong in stopping them, then why should you continue to act so unwisely? If they are returning now, why not heartily entertain them? Remember, moreover, that though you had these holy impulses, they passed away. Have you any reason to hope that they will continue with you now? Will they not, again, melt into thin air? Unless God, the almighty Spirit, at this time shall lead you to take decided steps, you will resolve again today, and re-resolve, but continue, still, the same! Of all things, the most pitiable sight, to my mind, is a man who has light enough to know he is wrong but not Grace enough to forsake the evil!

It is terrible to see a soul under impulses which urge it towards the right and yet remaining a captive to that accursed free will which enslaves it to the last degree. Alas, how many put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter and, therefore, will not come to Christ that they might have life? Such is the state of man! Such is the state of some of you! May God have mercy upon you for Christ's sake! It is mine, however, to return distinctly to the charge of my text and say, “Now then, do it.” Oh, Sirs, I wish you would do as one did a little while ago. I was preaching and I said that if any man sincerely went to God confessing his sin and just trusted Christ to save him—if He did not save him I wished he would write me a note to let me know it, for I had been so accustomed to declare that He would not cast out any that came to Him that I should like to know if I was laboring under an error.

There was one in my audience who went deliberately home and, kneeling at his bedside, he said, with all his heart, “I do confess my guiltiness before You, O God, and I do now trust myself with Christ that He may save me. Lord, cast me not away, for I believe in Your Son.” He found peace immediately and continued to feel the love of God shed abroad in his soul! And he, therefore, thought it right to tell me the good news. It greatly cheered me. Instead of being rejected, he was welcomed by the God of Mercy and found immediate acceptance in Christ Jesus! I remem-

ber to have said that if one believing soul was cast out by Christ and sent to Hell, I would engage to lie side by side with him in the quenchless fire forever and ever.

I repeat the pledge! If any of you perish repenting of your sin and trusting in Jesus, alone, I will perish with you! I will be bondsman for God, this morning, that if any one of you will humble himself before the Lord and simply trust His Son whom you accept to be your King and your Savior, He can no more reject you than He can cease to be, for so it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Now then, *do it.*” There is life in a look at the Crucified One! The Lord help you to look at the Crucified One at once! “Now then, *do it.*” Dream not of believing tomorrow or next year—nor even in half-an-hour’s time—but cast your guilty soul on Christ at once! NOW THEN, DO IT! While the Spirit of God now pervades this assembly, yield yourself to the silver scepter which is held in the pierced hand of the once crucified King and you shall live! Now then, *do it!*

III. Lastly, I have to REASON WITH STRONG ARGUMENTS. I will utter them rapidly, for time fails me. Here they are in a condensed form. You, dear Friend, need salvation! Sin has got the mastery over your nature and you need a powerful arm to set you free from it. Nor is it sin, alone, but punishment, also, which threatens you. Be you who you may, you are in danger of *eternal wrath* and you need to be saved from it! Now, it is evident that none can save you from eternal wrath but King Jesus. Will you have Him for King?

Whether you will have Him or not, you must have a king. Every man in the world has a master of some kind. Some principle or another has dominion over you and the worst tyrant a man can serve is himself. Self is the hardest and meanest of all despots! Seeing, then, that you must have a king, can you have a better king than King Jesus, who is Incarnate Love? Think of His Character and of the love He has shown to men and tell me, could you have a better King? Have you not already had enough, my Friend, of your old king? What benefit have you had in the service of Satan? What advantage has sin been to you? What elevation of mind, what delight of spirit have you found in the ways of transgression? The times past may suffice you to have worked the will of the flesh. Down with Ishbosheth and let David reign!

Here is the point about the King whom we preach to you—God has chosen Him to be King and proclaimed it in His everlasting decree! He has said—“You have to get My king upon My holy hill of Zion.” Can man make a better choice than God has made? The Eternal Father has looked upon His Only Begotten and made Him to be King of kings and Lord of lords—will you not say, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!” Will you not accept Him for your King, whom Jehovah, Himself, proclaims as such? I want you to notice the promise of the text, for this commends the Lord Jesus to all who are wise in heart. It is through Him that God will deliver you from your enemies, even from all of them.

Philistia’s giants feared David, who cried, “over Philistia will I triumph.” Your sins, your sorrows, death, the devil—all these, the Son of David

overcomes for you. If He is accepted as King, you need fear no adversary, for He will guard you with His great power and utterly confuse your enemies. Oh, Sirs, kiss the Son! With the kiss of homage accept the Prince of Peace! Crown Him with your heart's love. Bow at His dear feet and be content to yield the utmost loyalty to Him. May the blessed Spirit sweetly draw you while I am persuading you and may you now approach the Throne of the Prince of the House of David and be forever His joyful subjects!

Will you now turn to the 5th chapter of this second book of Samuel for one minute and see if we cannot all join in a reproduction of the scene which it describes. I wish and pray that the words of that passage may come true—“Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron and spoke, saying, Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, you were he that led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, You shall feed My people Israel, and you shall be a captain over Israel.”

Many in this house will join with me in accepting our Lord Jesus, over again, to be our King, and I wish some of you who have never yet accepted Him would unite with us. We shall be glad to see others of the tribes of Israel entering our ranks for the first time, while we salute our King. May the blessed Spirit lead you to do so, while now I say, in the name of all His people here present, “Glorious Lord Jesus, behold we are Your bone and Your flesh, and we delight to acknowledge the condescending kinship! In time past, when sin and Satan ruled over us, You were still the lover of our souls and You did redeem us and make war on our account. We bless You for the great love which You had to us, even when we were dead in sin. The Lord has said to You, You shall feed My people, You shall be a Captain over Israel, and we gladly accept You as the Lord's Anointed. Feed us, O Shepherd of Israel! Lead us, O Captain of the host! Behold, we enlist beneath Your banner—be a Captain over us today, for we are Yours and Yours alone—and before the eyes of God, Your Father, we give ourselves up, spirit, soul and body, to be Yours forever and ever! We are, from now on, not our own, for You have bought us with a price.”

All this has long ago been done by many of us. We are only repeating the declaration which we have made hundreds of times before. Oh that some of you poor souls would hear the voice which says—“Now then, *do it.*” To give you words with which to do it, we will all sing the verse—

***“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.”***

May the Lord bless you. Amen.

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

“THE KING CAN DO NO WRONG”

NO. 2420

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JULY 7, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them:
as whatever the king did pleased all the people.”
2 Samuel 3:36.*

DAVID was a great king and a good king, but his character was compromised by the conduct of Joab, who had been one of his chief friends and supporters. Abner came to David, in Hebron, and proposed terms of peace which David accepted. But Joab could not bear that Abner should be his rival and, therefore, he most treacherously murdered him. This abominable act was greatly to the detriment of David’s character—he could not prevent the crime, certainly he had not instigated it—and yet it was only natural that all the people would suppose that David had a hand in it because Joab was not merely one of his subjects, but his prime minister!

Dear Friends, in a similar way, the character of our great Lord and King among the sons of men is very much in the hands of His people, especially in the hands of those who are more prominent than others, and whom He uses in His service more than others. We may go and do, on our own account, things that shall bring dishonor to the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and King! He will have no part nor lot in them, nothing that He has taught will suggest them, and nothing that He desires will urge us, thus, to act. We may, however, of our own free will, even those of us whom the Lord uses most, bring grievous dishonor on His holy name. Jesus has often to lift up His pierced hands and when we ask Him, “What are these wounds in Your hands?” He has to answer, “Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.” It is evident to each one of you that all the vile insults of infidels could never dishonor Christ as the inconsistencies of His own disciples! No slur ever comparatively attaches to the glorious name of the Well-Beloved from His avowed enemies, let them slander Him as they may. But a blot does fall upon His sacred name through the inconsistencies and follies of those who call themselves His disciples, but who are not truly His followers, or, being so, are not careful to walk consistently with their profession!

We may well pity David that he should come under the opprobrium of the conduct of such an one as Joab, for in his heart he was entirely clear of the murder of Abner. Yet rumor was quite sure to attribute complicity in the crime to him. Joab said to himself, “Abner has deceived the king. He cannot, after all he has done, be true in his professions of friendship,

so I will go out and slay him.” And it is not at all an uncommon thing for us to dishonor Christ under the notion that we are showing our zeal for the King. We may be doing evil in the hope that good may come out of it! We may be indulging an unchristian, intolerant spirit in our zeal against intolerance! We may grow bitter in our love for love and in our hate of hatred! Such poor judges are we of what is right that we may even deceive *ourselves* into the belief that we are honoring our Lord and Master when we are, all the while, bringing disgrace upon His name! Perhaps Joab acted from this spirit and possibly some of us, at this very moment, are making the same mistake.

It is a grand proof of the stability of David’s character that he did not suffer in the estimation of his friends because of what Joab had done. He ordered a public funeral for Abner. He attended it, himself, wrapped in sackcloth, and he compelled Joab to attend it. He, himself, fasted as a sign of the deepest mourning, and when the people came and begged him to eat, he would not touch food till the sun went down—he sacredly observed the time of fasting for the death of Abner, for whom he sang a dolorous song of real sorrow—“And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put into fetters: as a man falls before wicked men, so fell you.” “And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatever the king did pleased all the people. For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner, the son of Ner.”

Now, it is to the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ that His cause and His Character survive all the follies and all the sins of His professed people. There was an eminent minister who once said that Christianity must be true since it survived pulpits. And another one added that he felt more sure of its being true because it survived ministers, for, taking them all round, they were more likely to destroy than to build up the cause of Christ! These things were said only in semi-earnest, but there is a great deal of serious truth about them. The cause of Christ must be true because the Master has survived His disciples! His wisdom has not been eclipsed by our folly. His power has not been lessened by our weakness. The glory of His holiness has not been beclouded by the unholiness of His people. The sun has risen in spite of the many clouds. The morning has come notwithstanding the mists of the night. Blessed King, You conquer with the poorest soldiers that ever fought a battle and You get to Yourself the greater, rather than the less renown, because Your victories are won by such poor followers!

In Christ’s conquests, it is never the soldiers’ battle, it is always the Captain’s battles and the Captain’s victories. On His head are the many crowns of all who follow Him, for there is not one of them who has *earned* a crown. Their crowns are all deserved by Him and when they are given to them, by Him, they naturally and of right give them back to Him, crying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created.”—

“Not unto us, to You alone,

Blessed Lamb, be glory given!

So, you see, our text has already led us into this profitable meditation upon our Lord! Good David, with his character in jeopardy through the wrongdoing of his prime minister, nevertheless passed through the trial, and his fame survived it. And the Character of our Lord Jesus Christ is such that, while daily put in jeopardy by us, yet it will still survive and His Kingdom will continue to increase—and His Glory will never wane.

This brings me, now, to dwell upon the second part of the verse—“Whatever the king did pleased all the people.” Wherever this is the case with any king, we may say of it, first, *this is the outflow of love*. Secondly, *this is the consequence of knowledge*. Thirdly, *this is the secret of rest*. And fourthly, *this is the fountain of obedience*.

I. First, then, wherever it is the case that whatever the king does pleases all the people, THIS IS THE OUTFLOW OF LOVE—and as it is the case with our King, that whatever He does pleases all His people, we can truly say that this is the outflow of our love to Him. Let us dwell upon that matter for a few minutes.

Dear Friends, if we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts, whatever He does will please us! We shall sum up all His past history in this one sentence, “He has done all things well.” And we shall foretell His future history just as briefly, for, “He will do all things well.”

Whatever our King does pleases us because we love Him and, true love, in the first place, *banishes suspicion*. When we do not love our rulers, we are afraid of the power that is over us. We think, perhaps, it may be exercised without tenderness, and we begin to tremble, lest, in some awful moment, the great foot should crush us, or the powerful hand should smite us. But when we truly love, we are not the victims of any such impression! No dark suspicions come across the soul that is once enamored of the Lord Jesus Christ. “No,” says the heart, “He will not hurt me. He will not destroy me. He will not forget me.” We cannot admit one ill thought concerning Him when, with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, we have come to love Him. Love at once banishes all suspicions!

It also inspires *implicit confidence*. When we love Jesus Christ, our blessed King, we feel that He must do that which is kind, that which is tender, that which is right—and we do not need to ask Him any questions—we leave the whole matter with Him to do as He pleases. We are willing to let His will be like the apocalyptic book, sealed with seven seals, if necessary, and we unhesitatingly say, “Let His will be done.” He who loves Christ much does not keep on asking for tokens, signs, evidences and manifestations!

That is an odd story, which is told of two Welshmen, but it has a great deal of truth in it. They were going out to preach and they parted at the crossroads, one to go this way, and one to go that. One of them said to his friend, “Brother Jones, may you get the Light of His Countenance in your preaching today!” “I hope so, Brother,” he answered, “but there is one thing—if I do not get the Light of His Countenance, I will speak well of Him behind His back.” Yes, just so! When we see His face, we realize

what a blessed Christ He is, but if we do not see His face, we are not going to find fault with Him! We believe in the truth of Kent’s hymn—

***“What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
‘Tis with the righteous well.
Well when they see His face,
Or sink amidst the flood;
Well in affliction’s thorny maze,
Or on the mount with God!
‘Tis well when they can sing
As sinners bought with blood,
And when they touch the mournful string,
And mourn an absent God.
‘Tis well when on the mount
They feast on dying love,
And ‘tis as well, in God’s account,
When they, the furnace prove.”***

If Jesus smiles, He is my Lord, but if He frowns, He is my Lord just the same! “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” That was a splendid utterance of Job when he reached that point and that is where true love always comes—it makes no enquiries or bargains, but it says, “My Lord is such a glorious King that I trust Him in the dark. I make no covenant or stipulation as to what He will do or will not do. I implicitly put myself in His hands and say, ‘Not as I will, but as You will.’” This is the sweet effect of love—it banishes suspicion and inspires confidence—and thus it comes true that whatever the King does, pleases all the people.

Love also *suggests unquestioning reverence*. When you come to love your Lord as He ought to be loved, with a worshipping, adoring, reverential affection, it is almost like treason, even, to begin to enquire the reason for *anything* that He does! “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him.” Is He not a King? Is He not my Sovereign and am I not only His subject, but His beloved one, and shall I begin to ask questions of Him as if I were a stranger and He were a tyrant? As if I were under a foreign rule? No, I am His Hephzibah, of whom He says, “My delight is in her.” And He is no more to me *Baali*, my lord, my master, but *Ishi*, my Man, my Husband! He has given Himself that name to show the closeness of His relationship to me and I must not, I cannot, I *would not* desire to raise any question about anything that He does! No, Lord, if it were possible, I would enlarge Your liberty to do with me and mine whatever it pleases You. Take no notice of my whims and wishes, I beseech You. If you were to notice them, they might be to my ruin. Let Your will be my will and Your wish, my wish. I most reverentially yield all to You. Thus, when we come to love our Lord so that we give Him His right place—and *we take our right place*—then whatever the King does pleases all of us who are His people!

Moreover, there is another beautiful feature about love, it *creates sympathetic feeling*. When we truly love Christ, our King, we are sure to be pleased with whatever He does. When our nature gets to be like His Nature—oh, what a blessed consummation that is! When our wishes and

His wishes travel the same road, though not with equal footsteps—when that which He aims at is that which we aim at after our poor fashion—when we can say that it is more delight to us that *He* should be delighted than that *we* should be delighted and that it is a greater honor to us to see Him honored than it would be to be honored. When we sink ourselves in Him, even as two divided streams, at last, dissolve into one—as I have seen a tiny silver brook come down to Father Thames and pour its whole self into him so as to be no longer anything but part of the great river—so, when our soul yields itself up in perfect love to Christ, to think His thoughts, and live and move in Him so that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us, oh, then it is that whatever the King does pleases all His people! Our heart has yielded up itself to Him and is perfectly content with that which He does, for it has no other will than that which lives in the Prince! When the Believer comes to be what he should be in the fullness of His love, his will is lost in the will of Christ. His very life is hidden away with Christ in God and then he realizes how true it is that whatever the King does pleases all His people!

Thus I have shown you that, in the first place, the pleasure of the people in all that the King does is the outflow of love.

II. That leads me, secondly, to notice that the love that manifests itself thus is not at all a foolish love, for IT IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE. Human love is blind, but the love which is worked in us by the Spirit of God is as full of eyes as are the great wheels of Divine Providence! There is the best of reasons why everything that Jesus does should please all His people—because everything He does is right—and we shall feel this in proportion as we combine knowledge with love, or our love is based on knowledge.

First, I suppose that *we know the Character of Christ*. Do you know it, Beloved? The God-Man, your Brother, and yet the Son of God—do you know His infinite tenderness, His boundless compassion, His unquenchable ardor of affection, His unfailing wisdom? If you have a true idea of who the Son of God is, who is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father, invested with supreme power over all things and always working for the good of His people—if you really know Him—then, whatever He does will please you! One who is so wise, so kind, *ought* to be supreme! He that is so good ought to be an Autocrat and to issue decrees of His own! Do we not all feel that it should be so? If it were otherwise, then we might quarrel with Him, but such a blessed Savior as our Well-Beloved is, why, we will not even in *thought* differ from Him, but we will feel that whatever He does, because of His great love, must please us!

Then, next, if we know Christ at all, *we know something of His designs*, and we know that He designs the Glory of the Father through the salvation of those the Father gave Him. He has laid Himself out to bring many sons to Glory. When we know that Christ’s love has such sweet designs and that He has purchased our eternal salvation, how can we, after that, quarrel with Him? Now, we not only know something of His Character, but we also know something of His Divine intent and we, therefore, know that we may assuredly say, “All that You will, and all that You do,

O our glorious King, aim only at this one thing—the perfecting of Your own loved ones and bringing them Home to Your Glory! Do as You please, for we will never raise a question with You about anything that You do.”

Furthermore, if we have truly become acquainted with Christ, *we know something of His modes of operation*. We have learned that it is His habit, often, to disguise Himself. His way is in the sea and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known except to those who are familiar with Him. We also understand that the bitterness is given to promote our sweetness and that, oftentimes, Christ’s frown is but a covered smile. It is the way with Him to lead His people into the wilderness when He means to ultimately bring them into the rest of Canaan. Knowing all this, let us have no altercation with our Spouse, our constant Friend. If all this is true, and it is, then let Him have His way! If this is His way of giving us superior blessedness, we will, without question, yield to Him, for whatever the King does, pleases all His people.

Moreover, if it were not so, *we know something of our Lord’s rights* and, therefore, we can never venture to interfere with His actions. Oh, what rights my Lord has over me! As I stand here, I confess that I am not my own, but that I am bought with a price. And you confess it, too, do you not, Beloved? Have you *any* rights apart from your Lord, you who are Christ’s purchased ones? What if you are jewels? You are only jewels in His case. What if you have a will? It is a dangerous possession to have a will unless you yield it up to your Divine Controller. Paul said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,” as if he had been bought in the name of Christ and branded in the name of Jesus with a hot iron—to be Christ’s slave forever. Shall you and I have any will in opposition to our Lord’s will? If it is His will that we should be poor and despised, or that we should lie sick in bed, shall we raise any question with Him? Let Him have His will with us, whatever it is!

Some of you may remember the story Dr. Hamilton once told of a poor woman who said the Lord had taught her to yield herself absolutely to Him. She fell ill and she was bed-ridden, but she never murmured, for she said, “If the Lord wishes me to lie here and cough, I will lie here and cough. What He has done for me is so wonderful and so good that I cannot question His will, but I will yield myself up to Him altogether.” “Whatever the king did pleased all the people.” Yet this referred only to David—shall it not be so, when David’s Lord is the King and we, redeemed with His precious blood—are the people who have to deal with Him?

So, in the second place, this pleasure in the King’s actions is the consequence of knowledge as well as the outflow of love.

III. Thirdly, beloved Friends, THIS IS THE SECRET OF REST—“Whatever the king did pleased all the people.”

If any of you are greatly distressed and troubled, I believe my text indicates to you where you can find rest. If whatever the King does pleases you, you may let down the anchor, for you have come into port! You will now be perfectly happy. To know that the King has done it and *to see His*

Divine hand in anything is more than half the battle, which ends in sweet content! If the Lord has done it, questions are out of the question! And truly, the Lord *has* done it. There may be a secondary agent, there probably is—the devil, himself, may be that secondary agent—yet the Lord has done it! It was God who afflicted Job, yet it was Satan who did all the mischief to God’s servant with an evil intent. But the Patriarch could see God’s hand in it all. So, whatever has happened to you, see the hand of God in it! A dog, if it is struck with a stick, bites the stick. Well, that may be all that we can expect from a *dog*, but you, who are no dog, must look to the hand that *holds* the stick, and not to the instrument with which you are smitten! And then you dare not bite the blessed hand that only intends your good in striking you. See God’s hand, then, in all that happens to you, and that will help you on the way to a very blessed state of contentment.

When you have seen God’s hand, then say, “*I would not have it otherwise than it is.*” I know several persons who are always in trouble and unhappy because there is a dispute between them and God. I remember one to whom I solemnly spoke, years ago, and not long after, he passed away. I went to see his dying child, the only one he had left, and he said to me, “Do not talk to my daughter about death, do not mention it to her.” “Well, then,” I said, “if I may not to mention death, I will not go upstairs.” The father said to me, “God could not take that child away.” He had lost several children, before, and he said that if his daughter died, he would call God a tyrant, and I know not what. As last I stood before him and I said, “You are making for yourself a rod that is much heavier than God, Himself, lays upon you. I fear that you will, yourself, die if you act in this way.”

As he could not be brought to reason, and kicked and rebelled against God’s dealings with him, I was not surprised to learn that soon after his child died, he, himself, also died. It does not do to quarrel with God. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with other potsherds if they will, but woe to him who contends with his Maker! Instead of that, bow before Him, not simply because you must, but because you delight to acknowledge Him as your Lord. Are you setting yourself up as the judge of God? Do you dare to summon Him to your bar? Are you wiser, better, mightier than He? Oh, lay aside this rebellion, I beseech you! Sob if you will, but let it not be the sullen sob of one who will not yield, but that of a dear child who sobs himself asleep upon his mother’s breast. Great God, You have done right in all that You have done! If we cannot prove Your wisdom, we know by faith that it is right, and we kiss Your hand and acknowledge that it is so with us that whatever the King does pleases all the people!

Well, now, if we can get as far as that—and God grant that we may—we are on the road to peace! Let us come, then, to this point, and *absolutely leave all things with Him as to the future.* “Whatever the king did pleased all the people” and if we are willing that our King should go on doing as He pleases, let us leave it so. I wish that our whole nature would consent to God’s will, not one faculty, only, but our whole being.

Let all that God does please all of us. Yield your understanding, your will, your affections, your desires, your memory—yield *yourself* up fully unto the Christ who loves you—then shall you have perfect rest, but not till then!

It may be, dear Friends, that some of us will soon die—let us have no questions about that matter—but yield ourselves to whatever the King pleases. Perhaps some of us may live to an extreme old age, when sight and hearing will fail, and it will be undesirable to survive. Let us raise no question whatever about that. If it is so, let it be so. I have heard of one good woman, a child of God, who was asked whether she did not wish to depart, for she was such a sufferer. Said she, “The Lord’s will be done! I have no wish about it.” “Well,” said one, “but if the Lord would say to you that you might choose, what would you choose?” “Oh,” she answered, “I have been so little accustomed to think about choosing that I should turn round and say to Him, ‘Choose You, Lord Jesus, for me.’” Why, dear Friends, if we had to choose our own lot and got into trouble, we would have the responsibility of it. Is it not far better for us to say to the Lord, “You shall choose our inheritance for us”?—

***“I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might!
But You choose for me, O my God,
So shall I walk aright.”***

If we take our own way and get into difficulties, then we may say, “How foolish we were to make this choice!” But if, instead, we yield ourselves up to the supreme Director, to be led wherever He pleases, and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd, it is amazing what a sweet contentment our spirit will feel! The Lord bring us all to enjoy that rest and peace!

IV. Lastly, THIS WILL BE A LESSON IN OBEDIENCE.

Whatever service the King requires of you will please you. He may put you in a pulpit, or He may put you in a kitchen. He may put you in a place of honor, or He may put you in a place of dishonor. It is yours not to reason why, it is yours to do the work appointed! It has been well said that if there were two angels in Heaven and the great King had said to them, “I have two errands to be done upon the earth—one of you must go and announce the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary. The other must go and stand and sweep a street-crossing.” The angels would not have a preference between the two services, it would be enough for them to do their Lord’s will! May we come to that point, that we may not be picking and choosing, but may be pleased with whatever the King gives us to do, and whatever our hand finds to do, may we do it with all our might!

But suppose that, all of a sudden, there should be no service to be rendered, and that *you should have to suffer, instead?* That there should be no battle for you, Soldier, no shout of war, no noise of music and no rushing against the foe, but instead of that, you should be sent into the trenches and have to lie there in the cold and wet, or be ordered into a hospital and have to lie there, to go upstairs, and never to come down again? If we have come to this point—that whatever the King does pleases all the people—how readily shall we lie still and suffer instead of

going forth to serve! If God is glorified, does it really matter where *we* are? What becomes of us is of small consequence compared with bringing Glory to His great name!

Oftentimes we are permitted *to work hard and yet to meet with great discouragement*. The congregation gets smaller or grows careless. The district seems as if it refused to be blessed. We meet with many impediments in our service. Well, if they are not impediments of our own making, if they come in the order of Providence, let it be so and let us still say that whatever the King does pleases all the people! It was a pretty remark I read, the other day, of a Christian man who said, “I used to have many disappointments until I changed one letter of the word, and chopped it into two, so that instead of, ‘disappointments,’ I read it, ‘His appointments.’” That was a wonderful change, for “disappointments” break your heart, but, “His appointments” you accept right cheerily! What if I am to have no success? I will pray for it and labor for it, and be ready to die for it—but if I do not get it, I will still go on. What said the poor Negro about obeying God’s command? “Massa, if the good Lord bids me jump through a brick wall, it is for me to jump at the wall and it rests with the Lord whether I jump through it or not.” He can make the walls vanish if it pleases Him! And if He desires it, I could believe, even, in the impossible! Love laughs at impossibilities and faith cries, “It shall be done.” Therefore, let us pray the Lord to bring us into this happy state, that whatever He does may always please us.

Perhaps some may find Christ, tonight, if they will get into the spirit of the text. If they will be pleased with God’s way of salvation and come and receive Jesus, now, just as He is, and just as they are, they will go out of this house saved! This is, after all, only faith in one of its forms, this being content with Christ, this yielding up of the will to Him. The Lord bless everyone of you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 147.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God.* You that know Him, you that love Him, “praise you the Lord.” “It is good.” “It is right, it is acceptable. It is good for you—the Lord counts it good. “It is good to sing praises unto our God.” And to God alone. There is no better argument for anything than that it is good, for good men delight in that which is good because it is good. For it is pleasant. That is a very happy conjunction, for it is not everything that is good that is pleasant, medicine to wit. It is not everything that is pleasant that is good, for there are some things that are pleasant in the mouth, but they are poison in the stomach. But to sing praises unto our God is both good and pleasant!

1. *And praise is comely.* Or, beautiful, delightful. It is the right thing. Men never look so like angels as when they are praising God, and angels are never more heavenly than when they are engaged in the worship of

Heaven. And that worship is praise. Here are the Psalmist’s reasons for praising God—

2. *The LORD does build up Jerusalem.* Praise Him for that. He is the great Builder, the Builder of the Church. He laid the foundations in the Everlasting Covenant. He carries on the building with infinite skill by His Divine Spirit—“The Lord does build up Jerusalem.”

2. *He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* These are the stones with which He builds, men who were like outcasts. What wonderful living stones these outcasts make! They love the Lord best who once were most His enemies. None sing of “Free Grace and dying love” with sweeter accents than the men who have had much forgiven. “The Lord does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” Mark the context between the two—it is when great sinners are saved that the Church is built up! There was more done when Paul was converted, I know, than at almost any other time, for he became the great Apostle to the Gentiles through whom myriads were saved.

3. *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* To be a builder and a physician, too, are strange offices to be combined in one, yet so it is with God. Is there a broken heart, here? The Lord is ready to heal you! See how He does it. “He binds up their wounds”—puts on the strapping, wraps round the linen cloth, and secures the flesh until it heals. A wonderful Surgeon is the Lord God Almighty, there is none like He! “He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.” What a singular thing it is that the next verse should be what it is!

4. *He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.* In His condescension, stooping over a broken heart. In His Omniscience, counting the number of the stars! The word signifies as when a merchant counts his money into a bag. So does God, as it were, count the stars, like so many golden coins. “He calls them all by their names,” as when the muster-roll is read and the soldier answers, “Here!” so does the Lord speak to the stars and they answer to their names!

5, 6. *Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek.* They are down very low in their own estimation, but the Lord lifts them up.

6. *He casts the wicked down to the ground.* The Lord is the great changer of men’s positions—those that are up He throws down—and those that are down He lifts up. Thus the blessed virgin sang, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.”

7, 8. *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains.* This is the true science, this is the real philosophy—not merely the laws of nature, but God everywhere—God cloud-making, God rain-preparing, God clothing even the hilltops and out of the way places with grass which no man has planted and which no man will ever mow! Perhaps there is somebody here who, when at home, is like grass on the mountains, away from all means of Grace, with nobody to help you, nobody to guide you. Listen to

this Psalm and praise the name of the Lord, “who makes grass to grow upon the mountains.”

9. *He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* The very best illustration of that verse is to be found, I think, in crows going to bed at night. You may have heard their caws. White says, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, that a little child said in his hearing, “Hark, Father, the rooks are saying their prayers.” It does seem something like it and I believe David had heard it, and that is why he put it here. “The young ravens which cry,” for those strange birds—rooks, crows, ravens and the like—even with their wild cries speak to God! Who can listen to the birds in the early morning without feeling ashamed of himself for not singing more to the praise of God? Some of the feathered songsters lift up their voices even in the night—the nightingale charms the hours of darkness—and should not we sing unto God when all nature rings with His praise? “He gives to the beast his food.” Any of you who are in great distress may pray to God, “Lord, feed me, for You give, even, food to the beast.” Do any of you need spiritual food? Cry to Him to feed you, for He gives even to the beast his food! Are you not much better than many animals? I remember “Father Taylor” once saying to himself, and then writing it, “I am in distress just now, and full of doubts: but what am I? When the great whale goes through the deep, the Almighty Father gives him a ton of herrings for his breakfast and never misses them—surely He can feed me.” Assuredly He can! He can give to all of us all that we need.

10. *He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.* As the kings did in those days, their infantry and their cavalry were their glory. The Lord does not care for that sort of thing. What gives Him pleasure, then? Listen—

11. *The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.* As kings have gloried in their troops, so does God glory in tender hearts that fear Him and that hope in His mercy! I love that double description—“them that fear Him” and, “those that hope in His mercy.” There is a mixture there—fearing and hoping—but the mixture makes a sweet amalgam of Grace! It is like a fisherman’s net—there is the lead to sink it and here are the corks to float it! If you only hope in His mercy, you will not come back empty from the great banquet of everlasting love—“Jehovah takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

12, 13. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.* Happy Zion, which God secures so well that even bars and posts are finished—not merely walls and gates—but the bars of the gates! There is nothing lacking in the Covenant of Grace. If the gates need bars, God thinks of the little as well as of the great—“He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.”

14. *He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat.* An old commentator says, “Generally, if you get quantity, you do not get quality, but when you deal with God, ‘He fills you,’ there is quan-

tity, ‘with the finest of the wheat,’ there is quality.” You get *both* in God—an abundance of the best.

15. *He sends forth His command to earth: His word runs very swiftly.* Great kings have tried to make their postal arrangements act with rapidity. In the olden time they employed swift dromedaries for this purpose, but, “His word runs very swiftly.” When God has a message to send, He can flash it by lightning, or dispatch it in an instant by one of His angels—“His word runs very swiftly.” I wish it would run to some of you who are rushing fast into sin, and that it would overtake you, and arrest you, and bring you to repentance and to faith in God! Here is a verse that may help to cool you on this summer’s evening

16. *He gives snow like wool.* It is as soft as wool and, like wool, it is a covering, and keeps the earth warm in the bitter frosts and saves the plants from death. “He gives snow like wool.”

16, 17. *He scatters the hoar frost like ashes. He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?* I want you to notice how, in the olden days, good men felt God to be very near. They thought that all this was caused by God—“He gives snow; He scatters hoar frost”—and they speak of, “His ice, His cold.” It is a poor progress that philosophers have made, to try to get us farther off from God than we used to be, but I bless His name that He is as near as He ever was to those who believe in Him! They can see His working and feel the touch of His hand! But what a wonder-working God this is who uses snow to warm the earth and makes the frost to act like ashes—yes, who makes bread out of ice, for when there is no frosty weather, the harvests are not half as good—the very frosts break up the clods and help to create bread for men! The Lord works by contraries. Perhaps, at the time that He means to save you, you will think that He is destroying you. If He means to heal you, He will wound you! If He means to lift you up, He will throw you down! Learn to understand His method, then, for this is the mode of His working.

18, 19. *He sends out His word, and melts them: He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. He shows His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.* That is the best news of all, that God reveals Himself to His children! All He works in nature is eclipsed by what He does in Grace!

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the LORD.*

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

MAN'S WEAKNESS AND GOD'S ANOINTING

NO. 334

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***"I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men,
the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me."
2 Samuel 3:39.***

You will remember that David was secretly anointed king over Israel by Samuel, but he waited many a weary year before the crown actually rested upon his head. For a long time he was an exile from the very country of which he was afterwards to be the sovereign. He was hunted about by the remorseless cruelty of Saul till he became like a partridge upon the mountains and the feet of the wild roe were not more used to flight than those of David.

A band of men gradually gathered round him, over whom he became the captain and he lived the life of an adventurer, the leader of heroic soldiers, who at once protected their country from its foreign foes and sheltered its disaffected subjects. At last Saul fell in battle upon Mount Gilboa and Jonathan, the heir-at-law to the throne, fell also upon that dewless mountain. David was assured of the death of Saul by the fact that the head of the king was brought to him by an Amalekite, whose crime he punished with death, though he hoped to have been rewarded with abundance of treasure.

David's own kinsmen at once recognized him as the leader of their clan and he, in Hebron began to reign over Judah and the south of the country. But the mass of the nation had not yielded to him and Abner, the commander-in-chief of Saul's standing army, fearful lest he might lose his influence and be supplanted by Joab, who naturally would become commander-in-chief under David, set up Ishbosheth as the successor of Saul. And so there became two kingdoms. David was the acknowledged head of the one and Ishbosheth, the master of the larger part of the territory. Abner was playing king-maker and he soon showed that he felt his power and meant to use it.

Having engaged in a quarrel with Ishbosheth, on account of Abner's desire to take to wife a concubine of Saul, he at once resented the interference of Ishbosheth and determined to put down the king whom he himself had put up. He came to David, therefore and made terms with him, upon which he would give up to him the kingdom and Ishbosheth should cease to be his rival. Joab hears of this and not wishing to be supplanted and perhaps seriously believing that Abner was not honest, follows after him, entices him back and just outside the walls of Hebron,

the city of refuge, slays him in cold blood—a most dastardly and treacherous murder!

David had nothing to do with it. He did his best to exonerate himself from it and pronounced an awful curse upon Joab the murderer and upon all his posterity. He had not, however, the manly courage to summon Joab to the bar as a murderer. David was afraid of him. The man had all the army at his back—and instead of being, as in his youthful days, fearless of man, David became for awhile a time-server and permitted the guilty to escape. He prepared a glorious funeral for Abner and made Joab himself walk as mourner in the train, accompanied by his king, who sang a poetic and mournful dirge over the bleeding corpse.

Then said David to his courtiers and friends, “I am this day weak, though anointed king. And these men, the sons of Zeruah, are too hard for me. The men who have been my bravest comrades and stood by me in the darkest hour, have been too hard for me. They have compelled me to submit to an action which my soul detests. They are criminals whom I cannot punish. The sons of Zeruah are too hard for me.”

It was necessary to state these historical particulars in order to set my text in its connection and now I wish to show how this passage in sacred history is but the transcript of what has occurred many and many a time in the history and experience of all the people of God.

I. The first remark I shall make will be this. We may be anointed and yet weak. Every Believer is an anointed king. He was really anointed in the covenant of election before the world was. When Jesus Christ was set up from everlasting, his people were really set up in him. When he was proclaimed king and when his Father promised to him glorious honors as the result of what he should do, his people were really constituted a royal priesthood in the person of their representative and covenant head. Every child of God also was actually anointed when Jesus Christ ascended up on high and led captivity captive and received gifts for men.

When Jesus took his seat at the right hand of the Eternal Father, amidst the songs of angels and the shouts of cherubim, all his elect in him did virtually take their thrones. “For he has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” But in our souls, our anointing time comes in that hour when, being called by grace and washed from sin, we begin to reign over sin, self, the world, death and Hell, by virtue of our union with Christ. Every Believer is a king today. It may be that he does not wear his crown, but lives beneath his dignity. Yet he is a king by right Divine. He is of a kingly, no, of a Divine race—he is sprung from the loins of the King of kings and he is soon to enter upon his full dominion. For when Jesus shall appear, then being like him, he shall reign with him forever and ever.

The Christian is then, today, in many more senses than I can now stay to enumerate, an anointed king and yet it is quite possible that he may be groaning out, “I am weak.” For weakness and Divine Anointing may stand together. You may be the object of God's grandest purposes. And yet in yourself, you may be the meanest of men. “God may yet intend to

accomplish by you the greatest marvels and it may be needful that, as a prelude to these wonders, you who are God's anointed should be compelled to feel very deeply your utter weakness.

God's children are often very weak in faith—they stagger at the promises through unbelief. It is not always in their power to “set to their seal that God is true.” They always have the seal of God on them, but they cannot always set their seal to God's promises. There are times when the strength of the flesh through sin has overcome the powers of the soul—when we can get no further than to cry, “I would, but I cannot believe, I do not doubt his love to his people, but it is a grave question with me, whether I am one of his people at all.”

Christians have ebbs of faith as well as floods; they have winters as well as summers, they have times of drought and years of famine. Sometimes they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow. The eye of their faith grows dim and the light of God's countenance being withdrawn from them, it is a woeful day for them and they sigh and cry and groan and scarce can call their lives their own. “Oh,” cries one, “that is my condition, but I thought I could not be a child of God, for I said, ‘If it be so, why am I thus?’” Oh, this is a common failing with the Lord's people. Think not that your name is cut out of the register because of the weakness of your faith. For there be many in Heaven whose names on earth were Little-Faith and Ready-to-Halt and Despondency and Much-Afraid. You may be an anointed king and yet exceedingly weak in your faith.

The weakness of a Christian's faith may also affect all his other graces. It must do so. For when faith is strong, every other grace is strong. When that is weak, all things else decline. It may be today that your hope has become very dim. You are in bondage through fear of death and see not the mansions in the skies. You have forgotten that you are in Christ and now you no more look for his appearing. Your hope declines and all your comfort dies. All this is possible and yet you may be an anointed king.

Pluck up heart, my brother. When you can not read your title, the inheritance is just as sure. When you can not feel your union with Christ, the union is none the less a fact. And when you dare not hope, even then—if you are Christ's—your soul is in his hand and you shall never perish and neither shall any pluck you from him. Let me add again that when the Christian grows weak in his faith and hope, it is no wonder that he is feeble in all his efforts to serve his master.

“Oh,” says one, “I preach now, but have no power in preaching. I pray, but it is not prayer. I totter on the knees which should be strong. I, who could once prevail and bid defiance to earth and Hell now tremble like Peter before a little maid and am down-cast and abashed by the smallest threat or calumny from the lips of my meanest foe.” Oh, but Christian, all this is possible, too and yet you may be an anointed king. For there is a sad difference between the estate of God's people now and their glory by-and-by. Yes and a wondrous difference now between the privileges to

which they have a right and the privileges to which they have the power to attain.

Sure, if they were what they might be and what they should be, they would be on earth well nigh as happy as in Heaven. God has given them power to tread on serpents and to defy the violence of flames. He has girded them with a majesty unrivalled and unequalled. He has put a crown of pure gold on their heads. Even now he has shod them with badgers' skins and clothed them with blue and purple and fine linen. He has made them kings and priests unto God, even this day and they dwell in the curtains of Solomon.

They have His Providence for their provision. They have his angels for their servitors. They have his Heaven for their last resting place and his bosom for their reposing place today. And yet are they often weak and often cast down by reason of sore trouble and the strength of the flesh and the perversity of their corrupt hearse. "I am this day weak, though anointed king. And these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me."

My dear Brethren, let me remark that David at this special time felt his weakness more particularly because he was in a new position. David had been an adventurer in the cave so long that he had grown used to it and you never find him saying when he hid himself in Engedi, "I am this day weak." No. After the first season of bitterness, I believe he came to love Adullam's dreary grot. And the bleak mountains were dear to him. But he has come into a new place—nations are at his feet—men bow before him. It is a new position and he says "I am this day weak, though anointed king." Whenever you make a change in life. Whenever God calls you to another set of duties, you will surely find out what perhaps you do not now believe—that you are weak, though anointed king.

Here, too, David had come into new temptations. The arrows had been shot at him before, from one direction alone, now the storm ceases on one side and begins on the other. If men knew that the storm would always come to one side of the house they would repair and strengthen it and then they would not fear the blast. But if on a sudden it whirled round and took the other corner, how would they be prepared for that? Take care, Christian men and women, how you change your position—often it is a remove for the worse. The arrows may not fly on the right, but they will meet you on the left and perhaps that may be your weakest side and there will you be smitten in the most tender part.

David had now no more the temptations which beset a venturer, but those which cluster thick around the throne. For where there is the honey of royalty, there will surely be the wasps of temptations. High places and God's praise do seldom well agree. A full cup is not easily carried without spilling and he that stands on a pinnacle needs a clear head and much grace.

And then further, David had now come into new duties. It was his duty to have taken Joab and have made him suffer the full penalty of the law for having killed Abner. A king must defend the oppressed and avenge the

murdered—but David fails to perform the new duty, for he feels that he is too weak.

Brothers and sisters, I shall leave this point when I have only conjured you to remember that whether you know it or not, whether new circumstances shall have discovered it to you or not, you are this day weak, though anointed kings. You are never more mistaken than when you think yourselves strong. You are never nearer the truth than when you have the very lowest views of your self. When you are stripped and emptied and poured from vessel to vessel, it is then that you are where you ought to be. When you can say, "I can do nothing apart from Him," and yet can feel that you can do everything with him—then you are on the verge of safety—you are on the eve of triumph and honor. God is with you and will greatly bless you so long as you know where your great strength lies.

II. The second head. It was but little wonderful that David's kingdom was weak, for it was but newly gained. And it is but little marvel if we also are very weak in the beginning of our spiritual life. When a king has had time to set himself down upon his throne and to sweep away before him this party and that, either by politics or by the power of the sword and so to put down every rival, then his throne becomes confirmed. But here is David, a man who is not descended from the royal race—and who, apart from the Divine anointing, which the sons of Belial would never recognize, had no right to the throne whatever.

And it is not much wonder that the house of Saul should be troublesome to him and that his old comrades, taking too much upon themselves because of their past services, should be too strong for him to manage. Young Christian, it is no wonder that you are weak, when the good work has only lately begun with you. See the lambs in the fold—it is well that they have been shorn in good weather—for what would become of the shorn lamb in the untempered wind? Shall we suppose that the young sapling shall stand as firmly as the oak with its gnarled roots and its hoary branches which have been twisted together by many a storm? What! Shall a babe fight a battle? Shall a new-born infant go forth to war?

Do you wonder because the new creature is weak? Wonder rather at its power than at its weakness! Does Satan triumph over you and do you marvel that old Satan is more than a match for a young Christian? Does the old world sometimes oppress your heart and are you astonished that an old world, with a thousand arts, should be too much for a babe like you? Does your old heart within—that old Adam of yours that is forty years old—seem too strong for that new Adam which is new created in you? Why, you need not marvel. The old man has had time to gather up his strength—time to learn the arts of war and the new man is unaccustomed, as yet, to fight.

It is true I have infant grace in the new creature heart more strong than Hercules, who strangled serpents in his cradle. We have seen the newly-converted sinner strangling his sins and conquering his lusts, but we cannot expect that he should always be the master of his fears, so as to

overcome doubts, answer questions and confound gainsayers. No, young Christian, trust you in the Lord your God, for you shall go from strength to strength, until in Zion you shall appear before God. I meet with many young Christians who are greatly troubled because they have not reached the attainments of older converts. Do you expect children to carry heavy burdens, or to be skillful in the arts, or learned in the sciences? No. We wait for riper years and greater maturity and we expect but little from the boy at school.

Even so in babes in grace—it were an idle folly to look for the attainment of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. Some Christians, as the old Puritan says, are born with beards. Some young Christians get experience very early and God calls them to hard fights and great enterprises while they are yet but lambs—but our Master does not usually make captains of his drummer boys. No, no. He picks the man for the place. He will have his veterans for the front ranks and put lads behind for a little while. Yet sometimes they step forward and like David bring down Goliath. And occasionally the babes and sucklings have accomplished greater works than the veteran saints. Yet that is not the rule, nor must you sigh and cry if the young kingdom of grace in your soul is as yet apparently weak and sometimes appears to tremble in the scales.

III. And now another parallel. Let us remark that David was weak only in the flesh and that the Christian truly is only weak there. Why was David weak? “Because,” said he, “the sons of Zeruah are too hard for me. I cannot subdue them. I cannot keep them under. I cannot manage any kingdom while such turbulent spirits as these interfere and intermeddle with everything.” Ah, David and did you not know this before? How different is this from your language when you were but a lad! Did not the Philistine say to you, “Come to me and I will give your flesh to the fowls of Heaven.” Did you know yourself to be weak then?

And yet you said, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” Ah, what a fall is there. David! ought you not now to have said the same? “Joab, I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts and though all the hosts of Israel are at your beck and command, I will do equal justice to strong and weak and your murderous spirit shall die and suffer because of what you have done in this my kingdom.”

Oh, that David's virgin-throne should have been stained with the unavenged blood of a murdered man! Here was want of faith, you see. David had as strong a God as ever. But he was weak in the flesh. And that, my Brethren, blessed be God, is the only weakness a Christian can know. We are never weak in our God—we are always weak in ourselves. Whenever you are in the midst of a difficulty and you sit down and say, “I cannot do this,” who ever thought you could? You ought to have known that you could do nothing.

But if your difficulty be never so severe and your position never so trying, is the everlasting arm too weak for your defense? Is the eternal eye unable to see through the difficulty? Or has eternal love failed you? "Oh, but I am so weak!" Of course you are and the weaker you are the better. But Jehovah is not weak. The Eternal One faints not, neither is he weary. There is no searching of his understanding. David was weak because he lived by sight. If he had lived as in the days of his youth, by faith in the covenant God who had anointed him, he never would have complained of weakness, but would have done his duty, even should Heaven itself totter about his ears.

Christian, have done today with talking of what you are and of what you are not. Remember the Christian's standing-place is not on the shifting sand of creature weakness, but on the immovable rock of Divine confidence. The reason why the Church of these days is such a poor trembling thing is because she always looks to man and seldom looks to God. If the world is to be evangelized, we examine our funds, we look down the lists of our subscribers, we count our missionaries. Oh, if we counted and reckoned on our God and looked to him first and only, we might yet say to dead nations, "Live," and the voice of faith should make them live and means, apparently inadequate, should soon suffice—if once our faith sufficed to challenge and to plead the promise of our God.

I am sure of this, my Brethren, that there are very few Christians on the face of the earth who live by faith as they should do. Yea, we are all at times pestered with that leprosy of the flesh, that looking to means, to circumstances, to that which is before our eyes, instead of ever seeing that which is invisible and resting on that mighty arm which, when we cannot see it, is still at work and which, when we cannot feel it, still feels for us and upholds all things by its power.

IV. I said that we were weak only in the flesh and now I want you to observe in the fourth place, that it is where the flesh is strong that we are weak. Why was not David strong? Why, because of the sons of Zeruah, yet these sons of Zeruah were his greatest strength! What could he have done without Joab and Abishai—Joab the man who smote the garrison of Jebus and Abishai who slew three hundred men in single-handed fight? What could he do without these? These were David's mighty men, those who always led the van and with a tremendous shout dashed among the Philistines and scattered the uncircumcised. These were David's glory.

Often, I do not doubt, as he walked in the midst of his companions in Engedi, he would look on Joab and Abishai and say, "What noble helpers! What men! How trained in the daring deeds of war! With feet leaping from crag to crag like the wild roe—with eyes piercing through the cloud of the battle—with arms whose crash is as the tempest, with faces terrible as lions making the stout-hearted tremble!" These were David's pride, his glory, his strength, yes and they were his weakness. So is it with us.

Whatever is our strength in the flesh is sure to be our weakness in the spirit. Let me give you an instance. Jacob was a man whose strength was in his cunning. He was a wise business man. He was a shrewd calculator.

He was wise as the children of this generation. Yes, but that cunning was Jacob's weakness. It was that which always brought him into trouble. He is cunning first of all with his poor old father Isaac. Instead of leaving the matter to God he must needs deceive his father with a lie and as the result of it, he is driven from the house of which otherwise he would doubtless, by the Divine will, have become a peaceful possessor.

He goes to Laban. Here, no doubt, he looked well to himself in the bargain about Rachel and as he did not trust his father-in-law, his father-in-law did not trust him and he finds Leah instead of the beloved one. Then it comes to the point of wages and Jacob is very wise there. Laban is hard with him and then he is very crafty with Laban. Laban first says he shall have the ring-streaked sheep and then those rods in the drinking-trough show what a wise man Jacob was. His visages are changed and changed and changed again, but Jacob outwits Laban. The whole history of that good man is of one strong in his wits, but weak in his faith—always a supplanter and therefore being always supplanted.

Thus the wisdom of man is rather an impediment than an assistant to the purpose of God. Whenever we are raised up by God to do any work for him, we must not sit down and say, "Well I think I am qualified for the work, because I have such and such gifts." It is just these very things which you possess which will be the heavy hindrances and not the successful assistants of your labor. Remember that your sons of Zeruah will be hard to manage. They will be too strong for you. Our Welsh Brethren are the best men in the world for preachers, qualified by God for it by their fiery spirit and yet if you were to mark the career of many a minister with a fiery spirit, it is just that which causes him to make shipwreck of his Church by quarrels and divisions.

A Scotch brother is qualified for theological studies by the coolness of his temperament and yet it will often happen that that very coolness often palsies his life and cripples him as a minister of the Word. I believe the strength of God's ministers generally lies in the points where they are the weakest and their weakness usually lies in their strength. That is to say, natural strength will be toned down by a spiritual weakness and a natural weakness will be exalted and be made the vehicle and channel for spiritual strength. It has often been so. The very physical appearance of Paul, his personal presence which was said to be weak and contemptible, becomes to him the subject of glorying. He glories in his infirmity, for it is the means of giving honor to God.

"This is strange logic," says one. It is, Sir—God's logic is strange. Gideon fears the Midianites because of the slender number of his soldiers, but the Lord says, "the people are yet too many for me." The king of Judah on another occasion hires for himself with so many hundred thousand talents a number of mercenary troops from the king of Israel. "Now," says he, "I shall win the battle." But before the battle begins, the Prophet bids him send these men back. God can do better without means than he can with means that are audacious enough to think themselves necessary.

The Lord will always throw the sword away from his hand when that sword begins to boast itself. Assyria is his axe to cut down the cedars, but if the axe glories the axe itself must be cast away. And so will it be with you if you set down any good thing you have ever done to yourself—God will bring you down. Learn instead thereof to be wise and if you have any excellency or any power pour contempt upon it. And if you have any weakness and any infirmity, glory in it because the power of God shall rest upon you.

V. And now one other remark and may God bless the Word to the comfort of all his people. It is this. We are anointed kings and yet we are weak. But our weakness shall not prevent our reigning by-and-by. David's kingdom did not shake, even when his heart failed him. And it would have stood just as fast if he had knocked away Joab and Abishai who seemed to be the props that supported it. God had sworn that David should sit upon the throne—David's strength lay in God's truthfulness, not in Joab's valor.

It was David's business to believe that come what may God's purpose must stand and God would do all his pleasure. It is just the same with you, Christian, today. However weak you may be and whatever means may have failed you, remember God has said it—you shall be saved. He has promised that you shall be glorified with Christ. And so you must be, come fair, come foul. Whatever betide, God must be as good as his word.

There are some professed Christians who believe that God's people may fall away and perish everlastingly. I don't know whether they think it is the weak Christian or the strong. But they believe that there are some who, though they serve God for years, may yet in a dark and evil hour forsake the Lord their God and may ultimately be cast away. Brethren, we reject, renounce and abhor that doctrine, as being not the truth of God, but an insinuation of Satan. We believe that every child of God, from the least to the greatest; every man who has put his trust in Jesus, is as safe now from finally perishing as though he were in glory. We do uphold and teach and it is our joy to believe, that all who have given themselves to Christ and who have been saved by his love, shall be kept safely in the hour of temptation and presented at last without spot or wrinkle or any such thing before his Father's face.

It is on this doctrine I am about to dwell a minute, while I say that we shall reign. Weak as we are, we shall reign in Heaven by-and-by and I shall attempt to show you why. For, in the first place, if we do not, God's attributes will everyone of them suffer an eclipse. Where is the power of God, if he cannot keep the people whom he has bought with his blood and whom he has called by his Spirit? Is the power of sin greater than the power of God? And is man's free will to be omnipotent and God's purpose to fail, because men will not let God succeed? I say that God's omnipotence would be blotted and blurred if he suffered the very meanest of his chosen ones to fall away and perish.

Or where were his love? If Christ can keep his spouse and does not, where is his affection? If Jesus can save his people and will not where is

his love and what is its vaunted value? It is either in God's power to keep a man from going down to Hell, or it is not—if it is not, then God is not omnipotent. If it be in his power, but not in his love, his love—I say it with reverence to his name—is not the everlasting love of which Scripture says so much. And then, his wisdom, too—would not that suffer? If his anointed sons shall not reign, why did he anoint them? Why does a wise God begin a work he does not carry on?

Has God purposed anything which he finds to be an error and therefore forbears to execute it? God forbid we should indulge such blasphemy. And where, my Brethren, where is Divine truth? What truth would there be in a passage like this—"I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands." If one of them should perish, that passage were not true. And again, those words of the Apostle Paul—"if when we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Where would be the reasoning there? Where is the truth of God in those statements, if his people are not saved by Jesus' life?

Then the Apostle Paul was deceived when he said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then God did not mean it when he said, "The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but the covenant of my love shall not be removed, says the Lord that has mercy upon you." Where is the meaning of that Divine assurance—"Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you."

I say, Beloved, that the Bible is like the husks of the winepress when the generous juice has been pressed from there, if you take the doctrine of final perseverance out of it. If God can change, if his purpose can fail, if his love can be taken away from one on whom it was ever set, I am not a Christian, nor would I think it my boast and my honor to serve God, if he were such a faithless one as this free-will theology makes him to be.

But further than this, if everyone for whom Jesus shed his blood and everyone who believes on God through Jesus be not saved, then God's Son is dishonored. He is a head, but he is the head of a mangled body. He is a king, but he is like the king of Naples, a king without a territory. He is a husband, but he is a husband without a spouse, or with a spouse that is only half there, half his and half the devil's. And then again, if God's people be not saved and if his Davids do not reign, then you have to accept the blasphemous alternative that God is defeated by man.

Here it is. God wills to save me. But I am told that my free will may master God. Out on your free will! Is free will to be God? If it be a god fall down and worship it and be an idolater as base as the worshippers of Baal. But I know that God is master of man and that man's will shall never match with God, but God will have his way. I ask now, in the name

of reason and of Scripture, what there is that can hinder God from saving the man whom he has promised to save. Why, his hard heart can hinder him! Yes, but he had that hard heart when God began with him and God overcame that bad heart and can he not overcome it to the end? Oh, but the man may not be willing! Yes and he was not willing at the first. But God made him willing and he that mastered his will then may master it still. Oh, but Satan may overcome him! And is Satan to make the purpose of God of no effect? And is a child of God to be a child of Hell tomorrow—alive today, dead tomorrow and then alive again. O miserable doctrine. Where is now our strong consolation if this be our portion!

In presenting such as the everlasting Gospel I feel confidence, because it is worth your having. Trust your souls with Christ today and you are saved, "He that believes on Christ Jesus shall be saved." "No," say our antagonists, "he shall not. He may be or he may not be; he may believe on Christ, but whether he is saved or not depends upon his own will." Sir, you lie against God and Scripture. "He that believes shall be saved," come what may. "Yes, if he keeps on believing." Sir, it says no such thing. It says, "He that believes shall be saved." He shall, he must, keep on believing. Where God begins the work he will carry it on.

Let me quote again that passage—"I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." "Ah," said a foolish minister once, "but they may pluck themselves out." A pretty idea! "No man shall pluck them out of his hands," and they may pluck themselves out as if they were not men. Or, says another, they may slip between his fingers. But then what becomes of that passage, "They shall never perish?" If one of his sheep shall ever perish, that word of God is either false or else had no meaning in it.

I was riding lately with a good brother in Christ who did not believe in final perseverance. He said, "I don't believe that many Christians ever fall away. I don't think one in a thousand does, perhaps not one in a million but it is possible, just possible and I think we ought to say it is." "But," I said, "one in a million does not improve your case at all. Because, if one in a million, why not you? Why not me? Why not the rest? Why not all? If some for whom Christ died may perish, why not all? And then a Christian may die and never 'see of the travail of his soul.' If some that believe may fall away and perish, why not all? Then how shall the promise stand if they believe and yet were not saved? If Christ may lose a part of his Church why may he not lose all? And then he may come to Heaven without a Church.

"Besides," I said, "I should feel that if one child of God may fall, certainly it must be me. But why should one fall more than another?" "Because one is more wicked than another?" "What is this but the old covenant of works? Their standing depends not on themselves, but on God. How shall they be prevented falling?" "By God's grace, I suppose." "Well, then, if God's grace can keep one, it can keep another. And if it cannot keep one Christian from going into sin, how am I to hope it will

keep another? And if some Christians persevere and come to Heaven, why may not others? What is the reason why?"

"Because some are better than others." "Then off with the crown from Jesus' head and put it on the head of the Law and sing 'Hallelujah,' to our good works after all." No, my brother. When your soul is given up to Christ, it is Christ's business to save it, not yours. When you have committed yourself into Jesus' hands—

***"His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All that his heavenly Father gave,
His hand securely keeps.
Nor death nor Hell shall ever divide
His darlings from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must forever rest."***

Fly into his bosom, sinner—fly now. And you shall rest there forever! And neither sin, nor Satan, nor self, shall ever pluck you thence. For he that believes is saved. He that believes in Christ, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The water which he shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. God grant you the blessing of perseverance, for Jesus' sake!

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THE SOUND IN THE MULBERRY TREES

NO. 147

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 31, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees,
then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out
before you, to smite the host of the Philistines.”
2 Samuel 5:24.***

DAVID had just fought the Philistines in this very valley and gained a signal victory, so that he said, “the Lord has broken forth upon my enemies before me as the breach of waters.” The Philistines had come up in great hosts and had brought their gods with them, that like Israel, when the ark of the Lord was brought into their midst, they might feel quite sure of victory. However, by the help of God David easily put them to rout, burned their images in the fire and obtained a glorious victory over them.

Note, however, that when they came a second time against David, David did not go up to fight them without enquiring of the Lord. Once he had been victorious. He might have said, as many of us have said, in fact, in other cases—“I shall be victorious again. I may rest quite sure that if I have triumphed once I shall triumph yet again. Why should I go and seek at the Lord’s hands?” Not so, David. He had gained one victory by the strength of the Lord. He would not venture upon another until he had ensured the same. He went and asked the sacred oracle, “Shall I go up against them?”

And when he was informed that he was not immediately to march against them but to encamp so as to surprise them at the mulberry trees, he did not demur a single moment to the mandate of God. And when he was bid to wait until he should hear the sound in the tops of the mulberry trees before he went to fight, he was not in an ill haste to rush to battle at once but he tarried until the mulberry trees began to sing at the top by reason of the wind that rushed along the leaves. He would wait until God’s sign was given. He said, “I will not lift my spear nor my hand till God has bid me do it, lest I should go to war at my own charges and lose all I have obtained.”

My Brethren, let us learn from David to take no steps without God. The last time you moved, or went into another business, or changed your situation in life, you asked God’s help and then did it and you were blessed in the doing of it. You have been up to this time a successful man.

You have always sought God but do not think that the stream of Providence necessarily runs in a continuous current? Remember, you may *tomorrow* without seeking God's advice venture upon a step which you will regret but once and that will be until you die. You have been wise up to now—it may be because you have trusted in the Lord with all your heart and have not leaned to your own understanding.

You have said like David, "Let us enquire of the Lord," and like Jehoshaphat, who said to Ahab, "I will not go up until I have enquired of the Lord." And you have not to ask priests of Baal but you have said, "Is there not here one Prophet of the Lord, that I may enquire at his hands?" Now, keep on in the same way—do not, I beseech you, go before the cloud. If Providence tarries, tarry till Providence comes—never go before it. He goes on a fool's errand who goes before God but he walks in a blessed path who sees the footsteps of Providence and reads the map of Scripture and so discovers, "This is the way wherein I am to walk."

This may be imputed to someone here. I thought I would begin with it, for it may be I have some young man here who is about unadvisedly to take a step which may be his ruin, temporarily. I beseech him, if he loves the Lord—I speak to none but those who are already Christians—I beseech him not to venture until he has sought counsel of God and unless he has a firm conviction that he is doing it not merely for his own advantage but to help him in serving his God the better. Unless he can be sure that he has God's approval of his steps let me—by the mistake that many have made, by the mischief that he will do himself unless he listens to me—let me beseech him to stop and not take so much as one half a step, or lift his foot, until he has sought of God and has had the answer, "Go up against them."

Thus I have introduced the text—but now I would refer to it in another way altogether. David was not to go to battle until he heard a sound of a rustling in the tops of the mulberry trees. There was a calm, perhaps. And God's order to David was, "You are not to begin to fight until the wind begins rustling through the tops of the mulberry trees." Or as the Rabbis have it and it is a very pretty concept if it is true, "the footsteps of angels walking along the tops of the mulberry trees" make them rustle. That was the sign for them to fight, when God's cherubim were going with them—when they should come who can walk through the clouds and fly through the air, led by the great Captain Himself, walking along the mulberry trees and so make a rustle by their celestial footsteps.

How true that may be, I cannot tell. My remark is only this—that there are certain signs which ought to be indications to us of certain duties. I shall use the verse in this way. First, *there are certain special duties which are not duties to everybody but only to some people*. If we wish to know

whether we are to perform these duties, we must seek signs concerning them and not go and rush into a duty to which we are not called unless we get a sign, even as David got the rustling among the mulberry leaves. And then I should use it, in the second place, thus—*there are certain duties which are common to all of us*. But when we see some sign of God's Holy Spirit being in motion, or some other signs, *these are seasons when we ought to be more than ever active* and more than ever earnest in the service of our Master.

I. First, then, in regard to SPECIAL DUTIES. I shall confine myself, I think, to one. The office of the ministry is a special duty. I do not believe, as some do, that it is the business of every one of us to preach. I believe it is the business of a great many people who do preach to hold their tongues. I think that if they had waited until God had sent them they would have been at home now. And there are some men who are not fit to edify a doorpost who yet think that if they could but once enter the pulpit they would attract a multitude. They conceive preaching to be just the easiest thing in all the world and while they have not power to speak three words correctly and have not any instruction from on High and never were intended for the pulpit, for the mere sake of the honor or the emolument, they rush into the ministry.

There are hundreds of men in the ministry starving for want of bread and entirely unsuccessful and I believe in regard to some of them that the best thing they could do would be to open a grocers shop. They would be doing more to serve God and to serve the Church if they would take a business and preach now and then as they had time to study, or else give it up altogether and let somebody come and preach to the people who had something to tell them. For alas, alas, a preacher who has nothing to say will not only do no good but will do a great deal of harm. The people who hear him get disgusted at the very name of a place of worship. And they only look at it as a kind of stocks, where they are to sit for an hour with their feet fast, quiet and still, listening to a man who is saying nothing because he has nothing to say. I would not advise all of you to be preachers.

I do not believe God ever intended that you should. If God had intended all His people to be preachers, I wonder how even He in His wisdom could have found them all congregations. Because were all preachers where were the hearers! No, I believe the office of the ministry, though not like that of the priesthood, as to any particular sanctity, or any particular power that we possess, is yet like the priesthood in this—that no man ought to take it to himself, save he that is *called* “hereunto,” as was Aaron. No man has any right to address a congregation on things spiritual, unless he believes that God has given him a special calling to the

work and unless he has also in due time received certain seals which attest his ministry as being the ministry of God.

The rightly ordained minister is ordained not by the laying on of bishop's or presbyter's hands but by the Spirit of God Himself, whereby the power of God is communicated in the preaching of the Word. There may be some here who will say, "How am I to know whether I am called to preach?" My Brethren, you will find it out by-and-by, I dare say. And if you are sincerely desirous to know when you are in the path of duty in endeavoring to preach, I must bid you do as David did. He noted the rustling in the leaves of the mulberry trees. And I must have you notice certain signs. Do you want to know whether you can preach? Ask yourself this question, "Can I pray? When I have been called upon in the Prayer Meeting, have I been enabled to put my words together and has God helped me in the matter?"

So far so good. "Well then I will go and try, I will preach in the street, for instance." Suppose nobody listens to me, suppose I go and take a room, or go to a Chapel and nobody comes to hear? Well, there is no rustling among the mulberry trees. I had better stop. Suppose I go to my wife and children and take a text and just preach a little wee bit to them and to the neighbors. Suppose, after I have preached to them, I should feel that they could preach a great deal better to me? There is no rustling among the mulberry trees and I had better give it up. And suppose if, after having preached for sometime I hear of none who have been brought to Christ? There is no rustling among the mulberry trees—I think the best thing I could do is to let somebody else try.

Then probably I have not been called to the ministry and it would have been a fearful thing for me to have occupied the watchman's place, without having received the watchman's commission. He that should take upon himself to be a policeman and go and do the work of arresting others, without having received a commission, must be in danger of being taken up himself for being a deceiver. And it may be, if I had not been called to the ministry and had no seal of it, I had better leave it alone, lest I go without God's commission and that would never answer my purpose—to begin without His having sent me. For if He has not sent me, it may be I shall break down in my errand and do no good.

I do not ask whether you are much instructed or learned or all that. I do not need to ask you. For I do not care about it myself. But I ask you these questions. Have you tried to address a Sunday-School? Have you gained the attention of the children?. Having tried to address a few people, when they have been gathered together, have you found they would listen to you after you had preached? Had you any evidence and any sign that would lead you to believe that souls were blessed under you? Did any of

the saints of God who were spiritually-minded tell you that their souls were fed by your sermon? Did you hear of any sinner convicted of sin? Have you any reason to believe that you have had a soul converted under you?

If not, if you will take one's advice for what it is good for—and I believe it is advice which God's Holy Spirit would have me give you—you had better give it up. You will make a very respectable Sunday-School teacher. You will do very well in a great many other ways. But unless these things have been known by you—unless you have these evidences—you may say you have been called and all that but I don't believe it. If you had been called to preach, there would have been some evidence and some sign of it. I remember, two years ago, some man wrote me a note, telling me that it had been said to his heart and God the Holy Spirit had revealed it to him, that I was to let him preach in this Chapel.

Well, I just wrote to him and told him that was a one-sided Revelation and that as soon as ever God revealed it to me that I was to let him preach here, then he should. But until then I did not see that the Revelation was quite a square one. Why should it be revealed to *him* and not revealed to *me*? I have heard no more of him and I have not had it revealed to me either—so that I do not suppose he will make his appearance here. I say this because though to a great many of you it would be nothing at all, there are a large number of young men here who preach. I thank God for them—for *anyone* who is able to preach. But I will thank God to stop those who cannot preach, because if they go about to preach and have not the ability and God has not sent them, they will just make fools of themselves—though *that* you should not be greatly surprised at—because they may not be far off already.

But they will make the very Gospel itself come into contempt. If they profess to preach who have not the call from God's Spirit, when they begin to talk they will just bring more scandal upon the Cross by a rash defense of it than would have come if they had left it alone. Now, take care about that. I would discourage none. I would say to every young man who has a grain of ability and believes he has been called of God and everyone who has really been blessed, "So far as I can help you I will help you. I will do so to the very uttermost if you need my help and I pray God Almighty to bless you and make you more and more abundantly useful. For the Church needs many pastors and evangelists."

But if there is no soul converted under you, if you are not qualified to preach at all, you shall have my equally earnest prayers for you that God may speed you—and I shall pray for you in this way, that God will speed you by making you hold your tongue. I waited till I heard the sound among the mulberry trees, else had I been uncalled and unsent. David

waited. He would not go to the battle till he had heard the signal from on High, which was the signal for the battle and the signal of the commencement of warfare.

II. But now, my Brethren I come to something more practical to many of you. You do not profess to be called to preach—THERE ARE CERTAIN DUTIES BELONGING TO ALL CHRISTIANS WHICH ARE TO BE SPECIALLY PRACTICED AT SPECIAL SEASONS.

First, concerning *the Christian Church at large*. The whole of the Christian Church should be very prayerful, always seeking the unction of the Holy One to rest upon their hearts, that the kingdom of Christ may come and that His will be done on earth even as it is in Heaven. But there are times when God seems to favor Zion, when there are great movements made in the Church, when revivals are commenced, when men are raised up whom God blesses. That ought to be to you like “a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” We ought then to be *doubly* prayerful, *doubly* earnest, wrestling more at the Throne than we have been likely to do.

I think this is just the time that demands your extraordinary and special prayers. I look upon that great movement in the Church of England, the preaching on Sabbath-Evenings in Exeter Hall, as a sign of rustling—a kind of “a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” My Brethren, I could pity the man that would be for one moment envious, though a thousand such places should be full to the doors. I could cry out to God for mercy on the man who could be so great a sinner against humanity and against the souls of men, as to wish that it should not prosper. With all my heart I pray that God may bless it and I exhort you just now—as there appears to be a move in the right direction, now that some of the ministers are more thoroughly roused up than they used to be, now that the ordinance of preaching is more honored, now that there is a spirit of hearing poured out among the people—I beseech you now, let your prayers be *doubly* earnest.

Do as David was commanded to do—rise up and bestir yourself, not in a spirit of envy, not in a spirit of strife—do not bestir yourself, lest the Church of England shall beat Dissenters. No, Brethren, let us each bestir ourselves that we may beat the *devil*. Let us each be earnest and let us each when we see a movement in any section of the Church, hold up the hands of faithful men and pray to God that if they are not faithful men they may be made right but that as far as they are right they may have a blessing.

I think the Church of Christ has lived to a glorious period. I really think the day to which we have lived now is a day that ought to gladden the eyes of many of God’s people. So far from being now, as I was a little time

ago, in a gloomy frame about the worshippers of the Church, I seem to think I have lived now to a happy era. Even the holy Whitfield himself never stirred up such a revival of religion as God has been pleased to give now. Not by his preaching did he stir up a host of bishops and clergymen to come forth and preach to the poor. God has been pleased of late to wake up the Churches far and near. I hear the noise among the mulberry trees. Everywhere I hear of the Doctrines of Grace being made more prominent and the preaching of the Gospel becoming more earnest, more energetic and more full of the Spirit.

We have seen in our midst some called out of our own Church, whom God has blessed in the preaching of the Word. There are in many places and I allude especially to the Church of England just now, “the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” Now, my Brethren, is the time for us to bestir ourselves. Oh let us cry to God more earnestly. Let our Prayer Meetings be filled with men who come full of vehement petitions. Let our private altars be more constantly kept burning, causing the smoke of prayer to ascend and let our closets continually be occupied by earnest intercession. Bestir yourself—there is a “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

That is concerning the Church at large. The same Truth holds good of *any particular congregation*. One Sabbath-Day the minister preached with great unction. God clothed him with power, he seemed like John the Baptist in the wilderness, crying, “Repent you, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” He spoke with all the earnestness of a man who was about to die. He so spoke that the people trembled, a visible thrill passed through the audience. Every eye was fixed and the tears seemed to bedew every cheek. Men and women rose up from the sermon, saying, “Surely, God was in this place and we have felt His presence.”

What ought a Christian man to say, as he retires from the house of God? He should say, “I have heard this day the sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees.” I saw the people earnest. I marked the minister speaking mightily, God having touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar. I saw the tear in every eye. I saw the deep, wrapped attention of many who were careless. There were some young people there that looked as if they had been impressed—their countenances seemed to show that there was a work doing. Now, what should I do? The first thing I will do is I will bestir myself. But how shall I do it? Why, I will go home this day and I will wrestle in prayer more earnestly than I have been likely to do that God will bless the minister and multiply the Church.

Well, what next? Where do I sit? Was there a young woman in my pew that seemed impressed? When I go this evening I will look out for her. I have heard the “sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees,” and I will be-

stir myself. And if I see her there, I will speak a word to her, or, what is more, if I hear another sermon like it and I see any who seem to be impressed, I will try to find them out. For I know that two words from a private person are often better than fifty from a minister. So that if I have seen a young man impressed, I will touch him on his elbow and say, "You seemed as if you enjoyed this sermon." "Yes, I liked it very well." "And do you like spiritual things?"

Who can tell? I may be made the means of his conversion. At all events, I shall have this sweet consolation to go to bed with—I heard the "sound of the leaves of the mulberry trees," and as soon as I heard it I bestirred myself that I might serve my God and be the means of winning souls from Hell. But, alas, my Brethren, much of the seed we sow seems to be lost for want of watering. Many an impressive sermon seems to lose much of its force because it is not followed up as it should be. God's purposes, I know, are answered. His Word does not return unto Him void. Still, I think we might sometimes ask ourselves, have we not been too dilatory, too neglectful in not availing ourselves of favorable times and seasons, when the power of the Spirit has been in our midst and when we should have looked upon it as the signal for more strenuously exerting ourselves in the service of our Master?

The same I might say of any time of general sickness, or any time of plague or cholera, or sudden death. There are times when the cholera is raging through our streets. The people are all trembling, they are afraid to die. Mark—that is the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." It is the business of you and me to bestir ourselves when people are by any means led to serious thought—when God is walking through the land and smiting down first one and then another and the minds of the people are all on tiptoe concerning what the end shall be. When there has been some alarming fire, when a sudden death has taken place in the street, or in the court, or in a house, it is the Christian's business to seize upon the time and to improve it for his Master.

"Now," said the Puritans, during the great plague of London, when the hireling parish priests had fled from their Churches—"now is our time to preach." And all through that terrible time when the carts, filled with the dead, went through the streets overgrown with grass, these strong-minded Puritans occupied the pulpits and boldly preached the Word of God. Brethren, that is what we should do whenever we see a time more favorable than another for telling sinners of the wrath to come. Let us seize it, just as the merchant looks out for very turn of the market, for very rise and every fall. Just as the farmer looks out for a good season for sowing or planting or mowing.

Let us look out for the best times for seeking to do good. Let us plow deep while sluggards sleep and let us labor as much as possible in the best season to make hay while the sun is shining and serve our God when we hear the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

And now permit me to go back to a thought I have given you. Keep the same idea in view in regard to *every individual* you meet with. If you have a drunken neighbor, it is very seldom you can ever say a word to him. His wife is ill. She is sick and dying—poor fellow—he is sober this time. He seems to be a bit impressed. He is anxious about his wife and anxious about himself. Now is your time. Now for the good word—put it in well, now is your opportunity. There is a great swearer but he seems by some terrible Providence or other to become a little abashed and he is not so profane as he used to be.

You should do as the ancient slingers did. If they saw a warrior lift his helmet, in they would put the stone before he could get the helmet down again. So if you see a man a little impressed and he is open to conviction, do what you can, as God gives you opportunity. And if any of your acquaintance have been in the house of God, if you have induced them to go there and you think there is some little good doing but you do not know, take care of that little—it may be God has used us as a foster mother to bring up His child, so that this little one may be brought up in the faith and this newly converted soul may be strengthened and edified.

But I'll tell you—many of you Christians do a deal of mischief by what you say when going home. A man once said that when he was a lad he heard a certain sermon from a minister and felt deeply impressed under it. Tears stole down his cheeks and he thought within himself, “I will go home to pray.” On the road home he fell into the company of two members of the Church. One of them began saying, “Well, how did you enjoy the sermon? The other said, “I do not think he was quite sound on such a point.” “Well,” said the other, “I thought he was rather off his guard,” or something of that sort.

“And one pulled one part of the minister's sermon to pieces and another the other, until,” said the young man, “before I had gone many yards with them, I had forgotten all about it. And all the good I thought I had received seemed swept away by these two men who seemed afraid lest I should get any hope, for they were just pulling that sermon to pieces that would have brought me on my knees.” How often have we done the same! People will say, “What did you think of that sermon?” I gently tell them nothing at all and if there is any fault in it—and very likely there is, it is better not to speak of it, for some may get good from it. I do believe that many a sermon that seems nothing but perfect nonsense from beginning to end may be the means of salvation.

You and I may have more knowledge of the Scriptures. We may be more instructed and enlightened—we may say, “Dear me, I do not know how people can hear that.” You may think people are not able to hear it but they are saved. That is all you have to look after. A Primitive minister has sometimes quite puzzled you—you have said, “I dare say the good man understands himself but I do not understand him.” And yet he has got all those people with their attention fixed. And you have seen souls brought to God under the sermon and therefore you must not say anything about it. You are obliged to say, “Well, it was not the sermon for me.” Never mind that, it was the sermon for someone else.

It is the best way for you not to hear that man again but let him go on. He will get some people to do good to, I dare say. I just throw this in, in an interjaclatory way. If you have got hold of people’s ears, or a bit of their ear. If you have got them to say, “I think I will come again,” do not put in any word that may keep them away. But bestir yourselves, to be the means of saving souls instrumentally, when you hear these signals from on High.

And I think, my Brethren, I must expressly make an appeal to you in regard to *your own children*. There are certain times in the history of my own beloved children when they seem more impressible than at other seasons. I beseech you never lose the opportunity. Salvation is of God, from first to last. But yet it is your business to use all the means just as if *you* could save them. Now there are times when your son, who is generally very merry and wild, comes home from Chapel and there is a sort of solemnity about him you do not often see. When you see that, get a word with him.

Sometimes your little daughter comes home. She has heard something she understands, something that seems to have struck her thoughts. Do not laugh at her, do not despise that little beginning. Who can tell? It may be the “sound in the tops of the mulberry trees.” Your son, a boy of fourteen or fifteen, is often coming home apparently deeply interested and sometimes you have thought, “Well, I do not know, the boy seems as if he listened rather more than others do. I think there must be a good work in him.” Do not, by any harshness of yours, put a rough hand on that tender plant. Do not say to him, for instance, if he commits a little fault, “I thought there was some good thing in you but there is no piety in you at all, or else you would not have done it.”

Do *not* say that, that is a damper at once. Remember, if he is a child of God he has his faults as well as any other boy. Therefore do not be too harsh or severe with him but if you find the slightest good say, there is the “sound in the tops of the mulberry trees.” There may be ever such a faint rustling, never mind—that is my opportunity. Now will I be more

earnest about my child's salvation and now will I seek to teach him, if I can, more fully the way of God. I will try to get him alone and talk to him. The tender plant, if it is of God, it is sure to grow. But let me take care to be the instrument of fostering it and let me take my boy aside and say to him, "Well, my son, have you learned something of the evil of sin?"

And if he says yes and I find he has a little hope and faith, though it may be rather a superficial work let me not despise it but let me remember I was once grace in the blade and though grace in the ear now, I would never have been grace in the ear if I had not been grace in the blade. I must not despise the blades, because they are not ears. I must not kill the lambs because they are not sheep. For where would my sheep come from if I killed all the lambs? I must not despise the weakest of the saints, for where should I get the advanced saints from if I put weak ones out of the Covenant and tell them they are not the children of God?

No, I will watch for the least indication, the least sign of any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel and I will pray God that these signs may not be delusive, not like the smoke that is driven away, nor like the early cloud and the morning dew but the abiding signs of grace begun, which shall be afterwards grace complete.

And lastly, not to detain you longer. Christian, in regard to yourself there is a great truth here. There are times, you know, "when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." You have a peculiar power in prayer. The Spirit of God gives you joy and gladness. The Scripture is open to you. The promises are applied. You walk in the light of God's countenance and His candle shines about your head. You have peculiar freedom and liberty in devotion. Perhaps you have got less to attend to in the world and more closeness of communion with Christ than you used to have. Now is the time. Now, when you hear the "sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees."

Now is the time to bestir yourselves. Now is the time to get rid of any evil habit that still remains. Now is the season in which God the Spirit is with you. But spread your sail and remember what you sometimes sing—

"I can only spread the sail.

You Lord must breathe the auspicious gale."

Be sure you have the sail up. Do not miss the gale for want of preparation for it. Seek help of God that you may be more earnest in *duty*, when made more strong in *faith*. That you may be more constant in *prayer* when you have more liberty at the Throne. That you may be more holy in your *conversation* while you live more closely with Christ.

And oh, with regard to some here, who tonight, or this morning, or at any other time, have been led to think, "Oh, that I might be saved!" If you have any thought about it, any serious impression, I pray that God the

Holy Spirit may enable you to look upon the impression that is made upon you as the “sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” I pray that you may be led to bestir yourselves and seek God more earnestly. If God the Spirit has convicted you in any degree, if He has impressed you, if He has made you tremble, if He has sent you home to pray—now, I beseech you—be in earnest about your own soul.

And if God has awakened you so far, look upon that as a token of His grace and say, “now or never.” It may be that this big wave will help you over the great bar that is before the harbor’s mouth. This may be the tide, which taken at the flood, leads on to Heaven. Oh, that God might help you to take it at the flood, that you might be carried safely over your convictions and your troubles and landed safely in the blessed haven of faith—that haven which is protected by the atonement of Christ and by the bar of everlasting love. God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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THE LORD LEADING—DAVID FOLLOWING NO. 2348

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 18, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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**In anticipation of an Evangelistic Mission to be conducted by
Messrs. Fullerton and Smith.**

*“And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops
of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself:
for then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the
host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD
had commanded him and smote the Philistines
from Geba until you come to Gazer.”
2 Samuel 5:24, 25.*

DAVID'S life was a life of war. The Christian life wears other aspects, but still, in very deed and in truth, spiritually, it, also, is a life of war. Our Lord spoke the Truth when He said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” The end of all His great work will be universal peace and the lion shall lie down with the lamb, but, for the present, men fight against the principles which Christ brought into the world and all who become the followers of Christ must expect to be soldiers of One whose life was one great conflict and who died upon the battlefield, yes, and was crowned upon the battlefield, too! Expect, then, to war a good warfare as long as you are here.

David had won one great victory over the Philistines, but he was not permitted to sit down and congratulate himself upon his triumph. The Philistines were upon him again. Those Philistines took a great deal of beating, but the powers of evil are not content anywhere with being defeated once or twice. They are up and at us again—they challenge us afresh, they hope to overthrow us sooner or later! And again and again we must be ready to resist them with this as our warcry, “They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” There must be war even *after* victory—and we must stand prepared for it.

Note well, however, that before David went to war, in each case, he waited upon God—“David enquired of the Lord.” Whenever we have any enterprise on hand, it is wise to wait upon God for direction and for help. David had received Divine Guidance before, but counsel in one dilemma is not guidance for another. Though David had been led of God the first time to fight the Philistines, he did not consider that the direction then given would apply again, so he went a second time. And it is written, “David en-

quired of the Lord.” The answers which David received on these two occasions were different. The first time, the Lord said, “Go up.” The second time, he said, “You shall not go up.” Had David been content with his former waiting upon God, he would have made a great mistake. What you have to do, today, you may not have to do tomorrow. And what you did yesterday may have been right enough for yesterday, but it may be as wrong as possible for today! Wait more continually upon God, dear Friends. Be not satisfied with what you have received of direction and support, but go to God again and again. If you go to Him daily for manna, you may well go to Him daily for counsel. David did this and he acted wisely.

I am afraid, dear Friends, that many Christians go carelessly blundering on, as we say, “neck or nothing.” They do the first thing that comes to hand and do not wait, and pause, and consider as they ought. I know some friends who seem to me to enter into great speculations which they had much better let alone, and who venture into various schemes which they would be much wiser to leave to other people. If they would only wait upon God, they would find themselves restrained from many things which now they attempt and, impelled to other things which now they neglect. The old proverb says that “kneeling does not spoil silk stockings.” I am not so sure about that. The silk stockings do not matter, but we may say that kneeling does not hurt a man’s knees! Kneeling makes him strong in the feet, brave in the heart and often clear in the brain. If a man will only wait upon God, it will help his own mind to form a correct judgment and, besides that, the Lord will give him guidance of which he never dreamed. He may have a token which shall be to him the very “clue of the maze.” He may get a word from God which will make him wiser than the ancients and it shall be as though the Urim and the Thummim still spoke out of the sanctuary to guide the saints of the Most High!

Tonight I shall speak about David’s experience, as recorded in this remarkable verse, in the following way. There is, first, *a prime necessity promised*. God promises that He will be with David. No, that He will go before him in this holy war! “Then shall the Lord go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines.” But, secondly, here is *a consequent action commanded*. “Then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you.” *Thirdly, here is a hopeful sign afforded*. “When you hear the sound of a going (or marching) in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself.” And, lastly, but very briefly, there is *a sure result following*—“And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him and smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.”

I. Well now, to begin with, here is A PRIME NECESSITY PROMISED—“Then shall the Lord go out before you.”

This was a necessity to David, for he had long ago learned that all his dependence must be upon God. It is also a necessity to *us*, for if we are to have a single soul converted, it must be the work of God. Yes, and if a single holy thought is begotten in this place, or any other, and fires the heart of any saint, and leads to holy service, it must be the work of God’s Grace! Without Him we can *do* nothing and we shall *be* nothing. What we espe-

cially need, just now, is for the Lord to go before us in our contemplated mission. In what way?

Well, first, *the Holy Spirit must go before us to prepare the minds of the people.* When our Lord came into the world, the world was prepared for His coming. There had been certain things done, all over the globe, that made the time of His coming the best time at which He could come. But it has also been noticed by our missionaries, especially in the South Sea islands, that before they arrived, certain changes had taken place and certain movements in the minds of the people, that made the missionaries feel that they had come just in the nick of time. God had gone before them in Providence and in Grace, making ready a people prepared for the Word. Now, I want you to pray the Lord to do so with all the congregations that shall be gathered in this place and, indeed, with all congregations. What can a preacher do if his hearers should come and God has left them to themselves? He would have to plow an iron soil that would break his plowshare and break his heart. How different it is where God has been at work with the hearers! A child has been taken to Heaven. The mother's heart is breaking with sorrow and she is tender and ready to hear of Jesus and the Heaven to which her babe has gone. Then a man has been ill. He had been a thoughtless, careless man, but in his sickness he has peered into eternity and he is now thoughtful and prepared for the preacher's message. Often have I said to myself, as I have come along to this place, "I shall have a picked congregation." The Lord has an election of Grace and He has also an election of hearers!

You cannot tell, dear Friends, how much the conversion of sinners is due to antecedent action on the part of God before the saving moment came. There is a fire and you say that the fire was made when the match was struck and applied to the wood. Well, that is true, but long before that moment, he who split the wood and he who made the match had something to do with preparing for the fire, had they not? Where had been your fire if the wood had not been dried and ready for the kindling and deftly laid in its place? And where had been your light if it had not been for the phosphorus and all else that was used to make the match? So does the Lord prepare for the fire of holy service. God is at work, dear Friends, in London as well as elsewhere. Sad is the poverty in this great Babylon, but, oh, if men could all be rich and wicked, how would they ever be saved? Grievous is the disease that follows sin, but if men could sin and never smart for it, what evil we should see! God is at work in Providence and, with tender touches, here and there, He is making men thoughtful, constraining them to feel, in a word, making them ready before the time of the preaching!

And then *the Holy Spirit must go before us to prepare the preacher.* Preachers may think themselves thoroughly prepared for their work, but the smallest thing may put them out—some little disarrangement of their dress, something in the pulpit not quite right, or somebody dropping an umbrella in the aisle—(as is so common, here, on Thursday nights), or some person in the congregation who does not seem in the least bit impressed. Oh, shame upon us that we, who have such a message to deliver, should be affected by such very little things! Yet preachers are so affected

and often they cannot help it. Even before the preacher enters his pulpit, he may get out of order for preaching. Poor man that he is, something may happen to him that may quite put him out of harmony with the Truth of God he has to deliver. Pray God to make our Brothers, Fullerton and Smith, preachers fit for their work—and the best preparation will be the Lord going before them! May the prophet have his vision before he speaks! May the hand of the Lord press heavily upon him before he lifts up his hand to point men to the Lamb of God! May his lips be blistered with the live coal from off God's altar before he opens his mouth to speak words of flame in the name of the Lord!

Pray, Brothers and Sisters, pray! Pray much that the Lord may go before to prepare the hearers, but equally that He may go before to prepare the preachers!

I will suppose that the hearers are present. In doing so, I only anticipate a few days. I hope that this house will be very full. The speakers are also here and ready for their work. They have come forward attended by your prayers. Now is the moment when *we need the Spirit of God to go before us to deal with men*. A single word, spoken in the strength of God, will effect far more than ten thousand words uttered in the power of mere reasoning, or eloquence, or even earnestness. When God goes before us, wonders are accomplished by sentences that seem very simple and trite—you have heard them many times, before, but *now* you hear them in a very different way! They fell, before, like flakes of snow. But now they come like flashes of fire! They burn into your bosom. They set your heart on fire!

What is the secret of this power? God is in it! God is working with it! He is proving His Presence with His people. It is a strange thing, but it is strangely true, that by the foolishness of preaching it pleases God to save them that believe. And, while His power is never promised to go with the most gorgeous ceremonies, or with the most beautifully artistic effect, it is pledged to go with the simple declaration of the Gospel of Christ and the preaching of His Holy Word! It is the Gospel of Christ that is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” Though I have said this ten thousand times, before, and you are always hearing it, and do not doubt it, yet for that very reason I say it, again, with all the emphasis with which I can—the prime necessity for every holy work is for God to go before—for the Lord to make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people! And if we have not that Divine Leader, we have nothing at all that is of real service in holy work.

II. Secondly, there is, in the text, A CONSEQUENT ACTION COMMANDED—“Then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you.”

God could do without us if He chose to do so, but *God is pleased not to do without us*. What a mercy it is that God deigns to use us! What a happiness for us! God might have gone forth with thunder and lightning against the Philistines and scattered them in a moment—but that was not His way of winning the victory. It was to be a fight between David and the Philistines and, therefore, God went before him to be the Source of David's strength.

But David must *follow*. When will some of our Brothers and Sisters learn the fact that *God's working is not a reason for our sitting still*? It is not written, "The Lord will go before you and then you shall rest," or, "The Lord shall go before you and then you shall sit still and be grateful." No, no! "Then you shall bestir yourself." Now, David, if you ever did move quickly, bestir yourself, now that God has gone before you! If you ever did use a sword with all your heart, soul and strength, do it now! "Then you shall bestir yourself." "Look sharp." That would be a very good translation, indeed. "Then you shall be all awake, and all alive. Then you shall rush upon the Philistines and destroy them. God has gone before you. Will you not follow?" What a mercy, what a privilege, what a blessing God confers on His people that though He could do very well without them, He does not please to do so. But where He goes as the Leader, He bids them at once heartily and earnestly follow Him!

Now, the doctrine that "Salvation is of the Lord"—that glorious doctrine which I believe with all my heart and which I desire to preach all my days—the doctrine that salvation is of God and God alone, from first to last, in every point of the compass, was never intended to be a soporific and to discourage the action of man. *The fact that God goes before us does not encourage us in sloth*. Yet some talk as if it did. Take the doctrine of Election, for instance. "God has a chosen people, therefore I need not preach to them." No, no, Sir! God has a *chosen people*—therefore I preach to them! It would not be of any use for me to preach if He had not ordained any unto eternal life. But as He has a people who shall assuredly be saved, I will thrust the Gospel magnet in among the mass—and those people whom the Lord has chosen shall be attracted by it! "The Lord Jesus Christ will not die in vain." Precisely so and, therefore, I need not preach Him, I suppose? But the very reason why I *do* preach Him is because He did not die in vain! The death of Christ that does not effect its purpose is not worth preaching. But the death of Christ that is effectual for the end for which it was designed *is* worth preaching—and more and more do we rejoice to preach it! The grand doctrines of the Gospel are not doctrines that lead men to slumber!

There are some who pervert them, as they do the other Scriptures, and it will be so throughout all time, for men will turn the holiest things into reasons for sloth and sin. We cannot help that, but there is nothing in the Truths, themselves, that should produce such effects. Our forefathers of the olden times who went everywhere preaching the Word, the Calvinists of France who, in the desert and wherever they went, hazarded their lives unto the death—the Huguenots, who could bravely do and dare and die for Christ—were, to a man, believers in these principles which are supposed by some to send men to sleep! The most energetic Christianity that ever was upon the face of the earth has been just this form of Christianity and, therefore, it cannot possibly be that the doctrine rightly used will encourage idleness or sloth! How can it? If you, yourself, were told, tonight, "Proceed on such an errand and your God will go with you," would that be a reason why you should *not* go? If you were bid to fight a battle and you were told, "God will be with you in the battle," would the fact that God would be with you and would win the victory, be a reason why you should

not fight? You must be made of strange material if that were to be the result of the promise of victory and the assurance of the Divine Presence! Nothing makes man labor so energetically as the expectation of success! And the certainty of succeeding because God is with them nerves their arms and makes them do what otherwise would be impossible!

No, dear Friends, we are not among these who say, “God will have His own and, therefore, I shall not pray or do anything.” Listen, Friend, if that is your language—God *will* have His own, but He will never have *you*, for you are clearly not one of them! God’s own never talk in such a style as that. God’s own have a very different kind of voice. You are not of His sheep, for you do not follow Him. The Christ—to what did He go? To slumber and idleness? No, but to incessant *service*—

**“Cold mountain, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”**

He knew that the Lord would give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession and, therefore, He prayed for all who had been given to Him by His Father! His life was a consecrated one spent in burning zeal and constant devotion to His great Father’s cause. And if you are one of the Lord’s own, it will be your mission to follow the Christ in this and, as He was, so will you be in this world. Come, Brothers, God is going to bless you! Do you draw back because of that fact? If so, surely there are two more lunatics than those in Bethlehem Hospital. No, no! Because God is going to be with you, therefore every man says, “I will follow where God leads. I will take my share in this grand fight, since the Lord, Himself loads the van.”

III. Well now, thirdly, in our text there is A HOPEFUL SIGN AFFORDED—“When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself.”

Whether these were mulberry trees or balsams, I do not know. It is very difficult to discover what trees they were. It does not matter, much, but David was to get round to the back of the Philistines instead of attacking them in front and he was to lie quietly in ambush till he heard a rustling in the tops of the trees when there was no wind, as though they were trodden by the foot of angels and God’s host was hurrying to the fray. Perhaps this sign, while it was intended to encourage David and his people, was meant to intimidate the Philistines. They would say, one to another, “What is that noise? What is that rustling? There is a sound of something traveling along the tops of yonder trees! There is not a breath of wind, but you can hear the leaves moving. Listen to the rustling! Something strange is happening.” The Philistines were most superstitious and would be ready to take to their hoofs very speedily! However, whatever it was to *them*, to David it was to be the signal for attacking them. “Now, up and at them, with sword and spear, and bow and arrow. Smite the Philistines when you hear the sound of the mysterious marching in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

Now, what are our signs that we ought to be up and doing for Christ? Well, we ought to be up and doing for Him *without any signs*. Every minute men are dying—every hour their souls are passing into eternity unsaved—every day Christ is pleading that He may be recompensed for

His passion. Christians should always be smiting the Philistines of sin, but there are certain times that call us to unusual action. And what are they?

To me they are, first, *when we see earnestness among God's people*. When we hear them say, one to another, "Oh, I wish we had a great blessing!" When we hear them talk, as one did to me the other day, "God is with us. We do have souls converted, but we do not see the great work that we long for, the hundreds of thousands brought in, the whole nation struck to the heart by a sight of the power of God. Oh, that we could see better days, brighter days!" I know many here whom I am now looking upon and I remember what they have said to me of their own groaning before God for a greater display of His saving power. That is to me the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!

Again, it is a hopeful sign, *when God gives us useful preachers*. Oh, what a blessing a true Gospel minister is! A man whom God has made for Himself is one of the Ascension gifts of Christ. And when you see, as you do in our two Brothers, Evangelists Fullerton and Smith, men who seem made by God on purpose for their work, suiting each other exactly and during those many years God has made them to be like a great cloud scattering showers of blessing wherever they go, I think, when I see these good men and others being prepared by the Lord, my heart says, "That is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees. God is going to bless us."

There was no better proof of the Reformation having begun than when Luther began to speak out against the abominations of Rome, and Zwingli lifted up his voice, and Farel proclaimed the old faith, and Calvin came forth to declare the Truth of God, and Beza and multitudes of others gave their testimony. Those were the birds that sang because the sun was rising! And when God gives us useful preachers, they are among the signs that He is coming near us to bless the people!

Well, when the preachers are there, with a praying people at their back, then, *when you see crowds come together to hear the Word*, do you not think that there is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees? Oh, what would some preachers do to get the people to hear them at all? Ah, what are they *not* doing, dear Friends? As things now go, I would not wonder at all if we were to have, in some of our places of worship, a part of Mr. Barnum's circus in order to attract a congregation! We have all kinds of fiddling, tinkering and I know not what, going on to get people to come and hear what is called the Gospel. "Oh," said one, "but he brought so many to the place!" Yes, if they had had a clown out of the theater, he would, no doubt have brought still more. If that is all that you need—simply to gather together a crowd—it is not so very difficult if you are not squeamish about the means you employ. But, oh, when God sends the people to hear the Gospel and nothing else—and they come and listen to what a man has to say to them about Heaven and Hell, life and death, the Cross of Christ and the way of salvation—that is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!

And, Beloved, we may say the same *as soon as there is interest felt in the Lord's work*, as soon as people begin to talk about it and say, one to

another, “What did you hear, there?” or, “What did the preacher say about the way of salvation?” Better still, when some begin to be impressed, when you find, after the meeting, some in tears who do not know much about the Gospel, yet, but who want to know. And when, here and there, you see signs of deep repentance for sin and a humble trembling, about which, perhaps, you hardly dare say much, but you rejoice that it is there—all these are tokens for good! What a comfort it is to see, in boys and girls, even in little children, some desire towards God! This is the going in the tops, the green shoots of the trees, this is the treading of angel’s footsteps where one would think footsteps could never be! This is what we need and as we have seen a good deal of it of late, we are looking for more of it!

And whenever you Christian people begin to see that there is some impression made upon the person sitting with you in the pew, edge up to that individual and begin to speak to him quietly but earnestly about his soul. Do not let anybody go away from the services without having a personal application of the Truth of God made to them. Here I stand in the pulpit and fire my guns, yet the shot may hit nobody. But if each one of you would carry his own private pocket-pistol and just apply it to the ear of every hearer before he goes away, there would be a good deal more execution done! There is many a man who is not startled by the firing of the Woolwich Infant, one of the biggest guns in the world, but he would be very much astonished if he had that kind of private, personal dealing with his own soul, here, from you, man to man, and hand to hand! Try that plan during the special services—ask the Lord to enable you to summon up courage enough to do it.

And you, good Sisters, who are too timid, as, yet to attempt that good work, break the ice, once, and there will not be much difficulty after that. You will find it to be a happy thing to speak about Jesus to souls that come in your way. “When you hear the sound of a going, then you shall bestir yourself.” My aged Brother, you have been attending here for many years and you are rather an old saint, but you are also rather an old sinner for never having spoken to other people about their souls! I want to urge even *you* to begin, you who know most and say most, you who actually have had a long experience of the things of God, but have pocketed it and kept it to yourself. Now I earnestly say to you, as God did to David, “When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself.”

“That is right, Mr. Spurgeon,” says one, “stir them up.” I did not say “*them*.” I said, and my text says, “Then *you shall bestir yourself*.” Dear Friends, it is all very well to say, “I like to see an earnest Church.” So do I, but it is better to have every member zealously seeking the souls of others, for *that* is the way to have an earnest Church, and that is the way the blessing comes. David, you must bestir yourself! Then the soldiers who are with you will catch the fire from their leader and they will bestir *themselves*.

IV. Now I finish by saying just a little, in the fourth place, about A SURE RESULT FOLLOWING—“And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him,” and “smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.”

The result was all that David could have expected and more. *Obedient action secured it.* David simply “did so, as the Lord had commanded him,” but he, “smote the Philistines from Geba till you come to Gazer.” They could not stand before him—he won an overwhelming victory and you do not hear much more about the Philistines after this. That final stroke had crushed them down. So, Beloved, may the Lord send us a great victory this next week if so it pleases Him! Cry to Him for it, pray for it believingly and it *must* be granted to us!

“David did so, as the Lord had commanded him.” I wonder of how many of my dear friends it may be said as of David, “he did so, as the Lord had commanded him.” I know that it will be said of many, that you have *thought* about it. But David *did* so, not merely thought about it! He probably thought, but he also “did so.” He came to the practical point. “I shall try and do a little something to help the mission,” says someone. “I did give away one handbill the other night.” Yes, yes, that is all right, but, “David did so,” that is, he did bestir himself and he did bestir himself most when he saw the signs and tokens of the Divine Power being put forth. “David did so, as the Lord had commanded him.”

If I habitually look after others and speak individually to them about their souls, and if I bring the Gospel before them, either in a printed form or *voice*—if I keep on testifying of Christ to everybody who will give me a hearing—I shall have conversions as surely as I am a living man. It cannot be otherwise. If you continue looking to God to go before you and follow after Him with that part of the work which He has put into your hands, and which is a great privilege to be engaged in, you shall not labor in vain, nor spend your strength for nothing!

“Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” How many times I have heard that text mangled and destroyed by being misquoted, “Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but except God give the increase, all the labor is in vain.” There is no such text in the Bible, although the statement happens to be true for all that! The other Truth of God, *which is in the Bible*, is Paul’s declaration, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” You, Paul, go on planting. You, Apollos, go on watering. And if God does not give the increase, let us know. What will we do when we hear it? Why, we will seek to learn the reason why and we will go to His Throne with tears and cries and say, “Lord, You have changed the whole business! It used to be, ‘Paul planted, Apollos watered; and God gave the increase,’ but now Paul plants, and Apollos waters, and there is no increase! Lord, what hinders the blessing?” And we will keep on crying to Him and never let Him go until He blesses us.

My dear Hearers, you who are unconverted, if you feel any spiritual emotions in your hearts, if you feel any desires towards God, if you feel any softening, if you feel any quickening, then bestir yourselves! And if ever, on brighter days than usual, you get just a little hope of salvation, then bestir yourselves! Oh, I pray you, you who are seeking the Lord, when there is any encouragement given to you—and how often encouragement does come—do not miss it! Take the tide at the flood. Come to Jesus just as you are. Trust Him and find in Him eternal life. May his blessing be with you all for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 144; 2 Samuel 5:17-25.***

Psalm 144. *A Psalm of David.* No doubt written after some great victory and also before another severe struggle. The Christian man seldom escapes from one difficulty without falling into another. Thanks be unto God, He that is with us in six troubles will not forsake us in the seventh!

Verse 1. *Blessed is the LORD my strength, which teaches my hand to war, and my fingers to fight.* David does not ascribe any honor to himself. Human strength is from within, from the nerves, sinews and muscles, but the Believer's strength is from without—"Blessed is Jehovah my strength." Now, if Jehovah is our strength, then nothing can be too difficult for us, for he whose strength is the Omnipotence of God can do all things. "Which teaches my hands to war." Just as the young soldier was, as it were, bound apprentice to the old warrior, went out to learn the drill and, afterwards, was taken by him into the battle, so does the Lord by Providence and by experience train His people's hands to war and their fingers to fight.

2. *My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust.* Here are six names, or rather, five titles of God and then an inference from them—"He in whom I trust." Oh, I know, you people of God, you can say of Jehovah, "He is the One in whom I trust." Rely upon anyone else and your hopes are doomed to disappointment—as a bowing wall shall he be—and as a tottering fence. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his refuge! Mind that you stand to this and never depart from it.

2. *Who subdues my people under me.* Probably this Psalm was written after the crushing out of the great revolt under Absalom, and well might David ascribe to the Divine hand his deliverance from that trial. It seemed as if the kingdom had gone from him—his ungrateful son had stolen the people's hearts and yet God was pleased to give him back his kingdom—and to set him upon his throne yet more firmly than before. "Who subdues my people under me." Christian, say that it is God who subdues your troubles, God who conquers your sins, God who enlightens your darkness, God who does all things for you! Give Him all the praise for every deliverance!

3. *LORD, what is man that You take knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that You make account of him!* Have you not often felt like this? You have said, "Lord, how could You have bestowed such favors upon me, so utterly unworthy, so insignificant, so unknown, so worthless?" "What is man, that You take knowledge of him?"

4. *Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passes away.* You know that a shadow is nothing. It is rather the absence of something than anything in itself. Shadow is the absence of light and what is man but, as it were, the absence of light, the absence of anything that is substantial? He is but the fleeting shadow of some earthly object which soon passes away. Having thus magnified God for the past and marveled at His loving kindness, the Psalmist now turns to prayer—

5. *Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.* God did but set one foot upon Mount Sinai and it became altogether on a smoke. “The hills melted like wax at the Presence of the Lord.” Well, Believer, you have many mountains, but you can ask God to “touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.” No matter what the mountains may be—high as the heavens your troubles may ascend, till they even seem to block up your pathway to the skies—yet one touch of the Divine finger shall make them melt away like wax before the fire—and you shall march on triumphantly to your God.

6, 7. *Cast forth lightning and scatter them: shoot out Your arrows, and destroy them. Send Your hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children.* Moses, you know, was called, “one drawn out of the water,” so are all Gods people—they are drawn out of floods of tribulation. They are surrounded by those floods as though deserted and left there to perish, but keen is the eye that watches over them, strong is the hand that preserves them and sure is the arm that delivers them!

8. *Whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* They swear, but they perjure themselves. They lift up the right hand but they lie all the while. Rid me, O God, from such men, for, of all enemies, those that can lie are the worst, for you never know where you are with such people. Snakes in the grass are the most dangerous reptiles and enemies who will do any evil thing in order to ruin you, and who will tell any lie in the world in order to injure you, are the hardest to overthrow.

9-11. *I will sing a new song unto You, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto You. It is He that gives salvation unto kings: who delivers David, His servant, from the hurtful sword. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* You see, good men sometimes repeat their prayers—they present the same petition over, again, and they thus follow the example of Christ, who prayed three times, “saying the same words.”

12. *That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.* Or, rather, “of a temple.” This should be the prayer of every parent, that his sons may be bringing forth fruit unto God, that his daughters may be fixed as polished stones in the Church of God to form a part of the great spiritual temple.

13. *That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.* When this is the case, spiritually—when there is milk for babes, meat for strong men and not a little of each, but more than enough for all—then are we very happy.

13. *That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.* Spiritual fertility is a blessed thing, when each Christian, each of the Lord’s sheep, becomes prolific in increasing Christ’s flock.

14. *That our oxen may be strong to labor.* That the ministers of God may be mighty. That Sunday school teachers and all earnest laborers may have strength given to them.

14. *That there is no breaking in, nor going out.* That there are no wolves to destroy by breaking in and that there are no sheep to suffer injury by going astray.

14, 15. *That there is no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people who are in such a case: yes, happy are the people whose God is the LORD.* May this be our case! And if it is our case, then the Lord is our God even at this day!

Now let us read about two interesting incidents in David's warrior life.

2 Samuel 5:17. *But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David. To thrust him down and kill him if they could—and so put an end to his prosperous reign!*

17-20. *And David heard of it, and went down to the hold. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hands? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hands. And David came to Baal-Perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD has broken forth upon my enemies before me, as the breach of waters. As a flood breaks forth and carries all before it!*

20, 21. *Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-Perazim. And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.* The Philistines brought their gods with them, in the hope of being, thereby, defended. But, "David and his men burned them." That was the very best thing to do with them. What a pity they did not save them for aesthetic purposes! Thus do men with fine old works of art, like pictures of the Virgin Mary. No, no, burn them! That is the very best thing to do with anything that ever has been worshipped by mortal man. If they have ever been set up in the place of God, they are cursed from that moment—let them be burned, or dashed in pieces—or in some way destroyed. "There they left their images and David and his men burned them."

22-24. *And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David enquired of the LORD, He said, You shall not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself. Or be sharp and go at them!*

24, 25. *For then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him.* I hope that may be said of you and me all our lives!

25. *And smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.* That is, he utterly overthrew them and drove them away.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—450, 298, 45 (VERSION 1).

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DAVID DANCING BEFORE THE ARK BECAUSE OF HIS ELECTION NO. 2031

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 1, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus and will be base in my own sight: and of the maidservants which you have spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor.”
2 Samuel 6:20-22.

DAVID had been soaring up on eagle's wings. Perhaps never in his life before had he so enjoyed the public worship of God. He had forgotten everything in the delight of bringing the Ark of the Lord home to his own city where he had prepared a tabernacle for its resting place. He had thrown himself into the gladsome service of the Lord that day. Nor had he been alone in joyful adoration—all the people had been unanimously with him in honoring Jehovah, the God of their fathers. It had been a high day, a day of days, such a day as the nation had not enjoyed in all its history.

The king came home to bless his household, wishing that all his family might share in his joy. Exactly at that moment his wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, who had felt disgusted at seeing her husband dressed like a common Levite and leading the way in the midst of the common people, came out to meet him, full of furious scorn. Her language to him must have acted as if a man had thrown a pail of cold water into his face. With sarcastic words, villainously exaggerating what he had done and imputing to him what he had never done, she scolded the man she had scorned. How he must have felt it for the moment! We need not wonder if some have thought that his answer was somewhat bitter. Remember that David was not Jesus but only David.

Always suspect some danger near when you perceive too much delight. It may sound like a paradox, but it is true, and experience proves that we never seem to be so near meeting the devil as when we have just met our God. When our Savior had been on the Mount of Transfiguration with His disciples, He met, at the foot of the hill, a father with a child possessed of the devil! Whenever you enjoy a season of peculiarly close communion with God and are full of very high joy, be on your guard. The very worst side of the world will be turned towards you when you have been nearest to the eternal Throne.

Probably Michal had never spoken so to David. But then David had never danced before the Ark of the Lord. Here stood the man of God confronted by one whose feelings were the very opposite of his own. Like an iceberg, she crossed the path of this great vessel and chilled it like an Arctic winter. This led David to reaffirm and yet more plainly state his faith in God. As many of the choicest words of our Lord Jesus were brought out of Him by the Pharisees, so one of the choicest statements of electing love that David had made was brought out by the sarcasm of Saul's daughter.

I hope it will be for our profit this morning to consider it. David justified what he had done by God's choice of him. If he had arrayed himself like a Levite and danced with all his might before the ark in the presence of the common people, he said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord."

Dear Brethren, there is a great power in the truth of election when a man can grasp it. When he knows for himself truthfully, and by indisputable evidence, that the Lord has chosen him, then he breaks forth in songs of Divine adoration and praise—then is his heart lifted up and he pays a homage to God which others would not think of paying. The Lord Jesus has manifested Himself to him as He does not unto the world. And therefore he acts towards the Lord Jesus as the world can never act and does what the world can never understand.

I am going to speak to those of you who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for you are chosen—*faith* is the sure mark of *election*. If you believe in Jesus and are resting in Him, this is the token that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. For no man yet ever had a true faith in Christ without receiving it from God and that gift from God is the token that He will give all other saving gifts, and that He has chosen that man to eternal salvation. The effect upon you of your knowing your election of God will be similar to the effect which it had upon David when he knew that the Lord had chosen him to be the ruler over Israel.

I. What effect had this doctrine, this experience, this inward conviction upon David? First, IT MADE GOD THE LEADING THOUGHT WITH DAVID. I believe that in every case where a man is inwardly persuaded of the Holy Spirit that the Lord has chosen him out of the world, the sure and certain effect is that the Lord stands out to him in a clear light and becomes to him the greatest force in his life, the chief motive power, the main thought of his mind. Observe how David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord." And all through the chapter you constantly read that David did this and that "before the Lord."

In the fourteenth verse we read, "And David danced before the Lord with all his might." It will be so—God will be realized in every passage of our life. Has the Lord chosen me to be His own? Then I see the hand of the Lord in my parentage, in my birth, in my bringing up. I see the hand of the Lord in my calling out from the world and in my conversion. I see the Lord in His Providence, in His preservation of me from the paths of the Destroyer. In fact, everywhere I see the Lord.

You will notice in the whole teaching of the Puritans, great believers in this doctrine of Divine Choice, that they saw God's hand in everything.

The laws of nature they knew very little about, but the Presence of God they knew a great deal about. And to my mind we have made a very poor exchange when we have given up the Lord for His laws and when the whole bent of our philosophy has been to teach us that God is much further off than our fathers thought. I love still to see God when I wake and watch through the day and believe that I see Him in all that happens.

In a thunderstorm I hear the voice of God and I see His Glory in the flames of fire. I love to think of God as sending us the genial shower and the cheery sunshine. I know it is all resolved into natural law but I am simple enough to see God rather than the law. The man who believes that God has chosen him, from that moment, beholds a living God in nature, in Providence and in Divine Grace—in fact, the Lord becomes everything to him.

This was especially the case with David in his devotion. David that day worshipped God in spirit and in truth. A great many people, when they go up to the assembly, are very particular about their bonnets or their garments. Somebody might, perhaps, notice their bonnets and this thought weighs heavily on their hearts. I have known people say that they could not go to a place of worship because they had not proper things to go in, their clothes being evidently a great consideration. What a turning aside from God to the tailor! Often people sit in the House of Prayer and profess to worship but they are noticing who is there and who is not there. And any little slip in the preacher's language is a welcome diversion to them.

They think of anybody and anything rather than God. It was not so with David—to him the Lord was All in All in worship. He said to himself, "I am King of Israel but that I may avow myself to be the true servant of Jehovah I will put on a linen garment today, like a common Levite." This he did "before the Lord." The Lord, who searches the heart, knew what David meant by his dress, by his playing upon the harp and by his leaping and dancing in the midst of the people. It was "before the Lord" that he showed his excessive joy. And if others happened to be there as spectators, he did not repel them but he did not restrain himself.

If the Lord accepted him and his offerings and his praises, he would have all that he wanted, whether the multitude or the princes of Israel accepted him or not. The man who believes that the Lord has chosen him unto Himself will worship the Lord alone and will neither idolize the creature, nor even cast a side-look upon him when he is adoring his Maker. It is ours to worship always and to worship none but Jehovah. I adore Jehovah. I take His Book in my hand. I read it believing it to be inspired. And while so doing, I do not sit as a judge but as a disciple. I do not criticize but I adore.

I look up to Christ on the Cross and I worship God in Christ Jesus—I do not quibble about the righteousness of substitution but I adore the wisdom and the Divine Grace which are displayed therein. He that believes that God has chosen him feels so high a regard for God that He becomes his All in All. He says, "This people have I formed for Myself." And we reply, "This God is our God forever and ever."

The effect of this Truth of God upon David was also that, as the Lord had become the great influence of his life and the great object of his ado-

ration, so He was to him his supreme Lord. Mark well the language of the twenty-first verse—"The Lord which chose me to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord." David did not say, "Over my people"—he acknowledged that they were not his people but Jehovah's people. He was only lieutenant-governor—the Lord was still the great King of Israel.

O dear Friends, if you have a due sense of God's choice of you, you recognize that Jehovah is your Lord and King. You are mindful of your stewardship. You admit that you are God's servant. If you have property, it is not yours but His who has chosen you. If you are placed in office in Church or State, still the Lord, who has chosen you, has sovereign rights over you which you acknowledge in your daily life, only grieving that you fail to be perfectly obedient and that when you have done all, you are still only an unprofitable servant.

Complete subordination to God is the desire of every man who delights in being chosen of the Lord. Oh, that we could practice it more and more! Those who are chosen are the Lord's portion and are not their own to live unto themselves. Those who hope to be saved by merit, work for themselves that they may win their wages. But those who have received the gift of God, which is eternal life, live unto the Lord, alone, that they may show their gratitude for His royal love. Our hearts are stout before men but in the Lord's presence we bow in the dust. The words of others we test and weigh but at the Word of Jehovah we tremble.

Every man who recognizes himself as chosen of God will loyally serve the glorious Lord who has chosen him. It is not ours to follow our wills, wishes, or whims—but ours to fulfill our life's mission at all costs knowing that He who has appointed us has an absolute right to do as He wills with His own.

The great system known as "The Doctrines of Grace" bring before the mind of the man who truly receives it, God, and not man. The whole scheme of that doctrine looks God-ward and regards God as first and the plan of salvation as chiefly arranged for the glory of the Most High. If you believe that everything turns upon the free will of man, apart from any purpose of God, you will naturally have *man* as the principal figure in your landscape. But if you believe that there is a choice on the part of the Lord, then God will become prominent in your thoughts. If you look to be saved by your own works you will, of course, think much of yourself.

If you believe your faith and your repentance to have come to you without the work of the Spirit of God, you will think well of yourself. And if you believe that your future perseverance depends upon your unaided self, you will look to yourself for everything and you will rely upon your own wisdom and strength. The doctrines which are not of Divine Grace lead you away from God and throw you upon self.

On the other hand, if you fully believe the doctrine which Jonah learned in the belly of the great fish—"salvation is of the Lord"—then you will trust in God, hope in God, love God, worship God, serve God and God will be even unto you as the rising sun, shining more and more in your heart unto the perfect day. I do pray that God may be great and greatly to be praised in the heart of everyone of us. May we serve Him with gladness

and come before Him with thanksgiving. For we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

II. Secondly, IT WILL CREATE IN US A PROPER DISREGARD FOR HUMAN OPINION. I have already told you that in his worship David did not allow the opinions of men to weigh with him. He worshipped “before the Lord,” and there he left it. Men might judge him mad, as Michal seems to hint that he was. Or they might condemn him as fanatical, extravagant and rabid—but this was as the chaff of the threshing floor to him. If any despised him in their hearts he was not moved. So long as he knew that his heart was right before God and that his worship was accepted of God, he would let others commend or censure at their own sweet wills.

God’s chosen servant is not the servant of men. He could not serve two masters and he does not try to do so. He goes about his Master’s business with a holy liberty of soul, for his bonds are loosed towards man. He does not seek honor from the many. You remember Saul and what he said to Samuel. Samuel turned away from him in indignation and was about to leave him when Saul laid hold upon him and said, “Honor me before the people.” That was the great idea of Saul’s mind. “Honor me before the people. Let the people think well of me. O Prophet of God, do not disgrace me in the eyes of the multitude, but let the people still have me in esteem.”

David sought not the honor which comes from men. It would have struck some minds that if the king wore the ordinary garment of a Levite, if he mixed with the crowd, if he became one of the people, if he walked in procession with them, if he even led them in the holy dance, then the common crowd would say in their hearts, “Is this a king? Why should we obey a man who is one of ourselves?” Potentates surround themselves with pomp and keep themselves apart—that they may have glory in men’s eyes. But it did not occur to David to provide against such a danger when the glory of God was concerned.

The populace might think as they pleased of him—he was the elect of God and therefore he did not consider his standing with the people. In the Presence of God it became him to abase himself and he did so, whether it was good policy or not. Kings before God are only men—and however bright their crowns or high their thrones—when they worship, they must lay aside their trappings and affectations of superiority and must bow before Jehovah in the dust. So King David did and in doing it he had no fear lest the multitude should hold him in the less esteem. O child of God, have a holy disregard of that Vox Populi which is profanely said to be Vox Dei—but which once cried, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.”

David did not even consult the judgment of the few. Of course he had around him a little set of special people, the elite of Israel, who had great reverence for royalty and all its dignity. Michal was the representative of these. Looking out of the window she looked down upon David in a double sense, for she could not bear to see a king dressed as a servant, a king dancing before the ark. She thought him light-headed and frivolous, if not distinctly mad. No doubt there are particularly nice and dainty people who will censure God’s chosen if they live wholly to His praise and they will

call them eccentric, old-fashioned, obstinate, absurd, and I don't know what besides.

From the window of their superiority they look down upon us. Suppose they do. They may wait until it is their turn to look up and that will come sooner than they think. The man who says, "God has chosen me," can afford to let others think and speak after their own nature. It is his business to take his stand separately and deliberately and distinctly to do what he believes to be right and let the many or the few do as they will. Beloved, the Doctrines of Grace put the very idea of honoring man out of court with us. Go and listen to certain preachers and hear how they enlarge upon the dignity of human nature.

My friend Dr. Pierson, who prayed just now, has accepted very little of modern teaching upon that point. For he confessed unto God that we were worse than the worms we trod upon. What do you say to that? We are not very dignified creatures according to that statement. And I fully endorse it. Dignity of human nature? Dignity of flesh which goes to corruption and the worm? Let those who will, extol the creature of an hour—I glorify the Creator, who is everlasting. Fallen human nature deserves no praise. It is not easy to find terms humiliating enough to describe the degradation into which sin has brought us, and the helplessness in which sin has left us, and the need of Sovereign Grace to save us from perishing forever.

If any think that we should magnify man, we are of another mind. We wonder that the Lord should be mindful of him and visit him. The Lord of Hosts will not endure that man should magnify himself. For He has purposed to stain the pride of all glory and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth. Proud man-worshippers will despise you if you hold to the Doctrines of Grace—they want something novel—and so they sneer at you as a piece of antiquity. Be content to be old-fashioned—God's choice of you is older than the fashions—and if that stands, you may well stand by the truth of it.

Some will despise you for your simplicity and insinuate that you are destitute of culture and science and are repeating exploded dogmas only believed in by the illiterate. This refutes itself. For the truly wise never show contempt of others. After all, God's Truth is more profound than all the speculations of men. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." Hold to God's Truth, challenge it who may. If you find a doctrine in God's Word which flatters human nature, let me know of it. I find therein great Truths which lay our nature among the diseased, the condemned and the dead. But none which sing our praises.

The Scriptures tell us that we must be born again and called out of our spiritual graves by a miracle. They also tell us that we are not saved by our works and that "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy." We are saved by Divine Grace and Divine Grace alone. And that Divine Grace is free and sovereign according to that wondrous word, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So, you see, the effect of this doctrine, when it is really grasped is to set the Lord on high in the soul but to put human opinion in a lower place.

III. Then, thirdly, A SENSE OF ELECTION CAUSES A LOW OPINION OF SELF. David said, "I will yet be more vile than thus and will be base in my own sight." David would more and more abase himself before the Lord. He felt that whatever Michal's opinion of him might be, it could not be more humbling than his own view of himself. Brother, if any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him. For you are worse than he thinks you to be. If he charges you falsely on some point, yet be satisfied, for if he knew you better he might change the accusation and you would be no gainer by the correction.

If you have your moral portrait painted and it is ugly, be satisfied. For it only needs a few blacker touches and it would be still nearer the truth. "I will be base in my own sight." This was well said. Perhaps if David had carried it out more fully and had been rendered watchful thereby, it might have saved him from his great fall. A sense of electing love will render you base in your own sight. I will tell you why.

First, you will never understand why the Lord has chosen you. Often will you sing—

***"What was there in me that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'It was even so, Father,' I ever must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Your sight.'"***

The more sure you are of the Divine choice and the better you understand it, the more will you enquire—"Why me?"

I dare say David, in a few quick thoughts, reviewed his former estate. He saw himself as the shepherd's boy keeping a few sheep in the wilderness. He saw himself fetched home all in a hurry because Samuel had asked for him. The Prophet had come to anoint one of Jesse's sons and each one of the big brothers imagined that he, himself, must be the Lord's chosen. But his hopes were quenched as the Prophet cried, "Neither has the Lord chosen this." David must be brought in.

What a change from the shepherd boy with a crust in his wallet, to the king who "dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to everyone a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine"! David could not remember the change without feeling that he was unworthy of such goodness. Is it not the same with us?

Then the king remembered the dangers and troubles he had experienced. Oh, that some persons who talk so proudly could but know a little of the rough side of life! Hunted like a partridge on the mountains, bearing his life in his hand for many a day, David had at last passed out of persecution and had become the accepted king of all Israel! Because the Lord had chosen him, He had helped and saved him from the hand of all his enemies. His bitter experiences made him wear his honors meekly.

Brothers and Sisters, if you have had a tried experience you will look back upon it with deep gratitude and self-abasement. The tears will be in your eyes as you sing of judgment and mercy and abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness. I cannot exalt myself, nor talk of my works, my prayers, my desires, my seeking of the Lord, or anything that is my own. For my salvation was all of Divine Grace and the Lord worked all my works in me. The doctrine of Distinguishing Grace sinks us, and our

experience in connection with it sinks us. We cannot lie low enough before the Lord.

David's high position must have made him feel lowly when he knew to whom he owed it all. When a man prospers little by little he may become used to it and grow proud. But when the Lord heaps on His bounties we become like Peter's boat, which was so filled with fish that it began to sink. Well may we be humbled by the great mercies of the Lord. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." A little while ago we were heirs of wrath even as others. How could the Lord adopt such poor creatures? I cannot make it out.

I, that once loved sin, am now made to hate it. I, that was a stranger to God and to His service, am enriched with access to the Throne of God. I, that was without strength, have now Grace to do all things through Christ that strengthens me. Oh the greatness, the unspeakable greatness of almighty love! Brothers and Sisters, if this does not humble you, then you are not really Believers. If you have really obtained the mercies of the Covenant through the Lord's gracious choice of you, the knowledge of this fact will lay you low and keep you there. Your cry will be, "Why me, Lord? Why me?"—

I once had a dear Friend, a man of God who is now in Heaven, a clergyman of the Church of England. His name was Curme and he used, with a pleasant smile, to divide his name into two syllables and say—"Cur me," which in the Latin signifies, "Why me?"

***"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"***

All the while David had a deep sense of his personal unworthiness. He did not know his own heart fully—no man does so. But he knew enough of himself to make him base in his own sight. For he could never think himself worthy of the choice of God and all that it involved. Our heart adores and wonders as we think of the election of God. As we rise in the assurance of the Divine choice, we sink in our valuation of ourselves.

IV. A SENSE OF DIVINE ELECTION FOSTERS A FEELING OF HOLY BROTHERHOOD. There is David arrayed as a common Levite. He is down among the people and he is leading them in the holy dance before the Ark of the Lord. David, why, you ought to have had too much self-respect to be acting so! Kings should keep themselves to themselves. Dignities should be worn with decorum. Yes, but David does not feel that he is in the least degraded by associating with the *people of the Lord*.

It is wonderful how democratic the Doctrines of Grace are and how aristocratic they are, too. The chosen are all kings and when we mix with the poorest of them we are kings with kings. Free Grace strips the proud but it adorns the humble. If we can fare as God's people fare, we are well content. We despise not one of the least of Christ's little ones. David was the Lord's servant, like the rest of them and he was not ashamed to show it. No, he rejoiced that it was so and said, "O Lord, I am Your servant. I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds." Specially had the bonds of pride been broken from him and he

had been made to feel it a joy to be numbered with the least of the people of God.

David honored the most humble of the Lord's chosen. For when Michal talked about what the handmaids of his servants would say, he answered, "Of the maidservants which you have spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor." To be esteemed by them was a cheer to him. I would rather have the esteem of the maidservant who loves the Lord than the respect of her mistress who is a stranger to the Divine life. It is better to have the love of the poorest man in the workhouse if he is a child of God, than to have honor from the most eminent of those who know not the Lord.

We do not measure you, my Hearers, by the amount of your money or the breadth of your acres—to us there are only two classes—the Lord's people and the Lord's enemies. To which class do you belong? If you are not among His believing people, may the Lord have mercy upon you and bring you to His feet. But if you are among the heirs of Divine Grace, we value you above the gold of Ophir. How beautiful it is to see the learned and the illiterate, the great and the lowly made one family by the Grace of God! It is marvelous what power this has had in the Christian Church.

And I pray its power may be felt more and more until everything like caste and class is abolished in the Church of God and we shall become Brethren, indeed, and of a truth. As the chosen of God, our names are written in the *same* book, we are redeemed with the *same* blood, we are called by the *same* Spirit, we are quickened by the *same* life and hope soon to meet in the *same* Heaven. This is the true confederation, the union of hearts in the common Lord. As the elect of God, we break away from the world, but we come together in one body in Christ.

V. I have been quick upon that point, for time is flying with six wings and I want to dwell a minute upon this point. A SENSE OF BEING CHOSEN OF GOD STIRS A DESIRE FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Such service will be personal. Look at David. He must serve God himself. He cannot let the priests and Levites do it. He must take a turn as a Levite himself. Lots of people allow their ministers to serve God for them, or they subscribe to societies that by means of a committee they may serve God secondhand. The man that God has chosen must have a personal religion and he must offer a personal service. The woman who had had much forgiven did not come to Peter and say, "Please, Mr. Peter, I have an alabaster box of ointment—will you at some proper time or other be pleased to pour it upon the Master?"

No, she must break the alabaster box and pour out the ointment herself. David cannot be satisfied with all that priests and Levites can do for him. He must honor the Lord Himself. This personal service will be cheerful. "David went and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obedom into the city of David with gladness." Who should be so glad as God's elect? If the Lord has chosen me, He has put a chime of bells into the belfry of my soul. Let the slaves who are earning their salvation serve Him with gloom and terror. As for me, to whom salvation has been freely given, I must come into His Presence with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

The oil of gladness which is poured upon our Lord Jesus as our Head runs down to the least and lowest of us. If you are really chosen of God you will take pleasure in what you can do for Him. Your duty will be your delight. You cannot do enough for your Lord. You are always wanting to do more when you have done most. And gifts which you can present and deeds which you can perform are the greatest enjoyments of your life.

This service will be in connection with the great sacrifice. David served God by offering sacrifices. All along the way by which he brought the ark he left a track of blood, the blood of appointed burnt offerings and peace offerings. If you serve God aright, you will be forever remembering the Cross and the substitutionary death there accomplished for our redemption. You will only hope to be accepted in your work of faith through the one great Sacrifice for sin. We need more of Jesus in all that we do for our God.

This service should be thoughtful. David set to work and wrote Psalms in honor of the Lord that chose him. He who loves God will take a turn at almost everything. He will sing and bless and pray and preach and a thousand other things, if he can. I would not like a string of my harp to rust. You do not know what is in you yet. Try to do something more for your Lord. Write sonnets to the praise and glory of His wondrous Grace if you can.

This service must be obedient. David was careful that day in bringing back the ark into the tent in a proper manner. Everything was done according to Law. The chosen of God feels bound to be careful of the will of Him that chose him. If God commands a thing, it must be done. It may be that he belongs to a Church which does not see it. But if *he* sees it, he does not excuse himself by the blindness of others. If he believes that the Lord has commanded a thing, although it is said to be non-essential and secondary, he obeys. God's precepts bind His chosen. They delight to run in the way of His Commandments.

This service should be practical. See what David did to show his love to God. He fed the people of God. Was there ever such a flock? I do not know how many millions there were but David fed them all. "Feed My sheep," said Christ to Peter. David fed the flock committed to his charge that day. Brethren, let us look after the sheep and the lambs and never weary of giving them food convenient for them. The Lord has chosen us on purpose that we may feed His people.

This service must be seen at home. If you are chosen of God you will, like David, bless your household. You will long to see your sons and daughters brought to God. Oh, how you will cry to God, even as Abraham did—"O that Ishmael might live before You!" How glad you will be if your child turns out to be an Isaac! There will be family prayer in your house if you know that God has chosen you. For the Lord might say of you what He said of Abraham—"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him."

It is one of the marks of God's people that they never set up a tent without building an altar. There is no roof to a house if daily prayer is neglected. Saints will have God in the house for their children and their ser-

wants as well as for themselves. May the Lord's choice of you impel you to His constant service.

VI. Now I come to my last point. A SENSE OF DIVINE ELECTION WILL EXCITE SACRED ENTHUSIASM. David had an inward delight in God. God was his exceeding joy. Personally, I have overflowing joy in the doctrines of eternal, unchanging love. It is bliss to know that the Lord has chosen me. When I am down very low in spirit, I crave for those old books which, like the Lord Jesus, are full of Grace and Truth. You who are at ease in Zion can do with the chaffy modern theology. But when your heart is heavy, and especially when your conscience is under a sense of sin, you will want these two dishes on the table—Free Grace and dying love—and you cannot do without them.

We must have an atoning sacrifice and Free Grace to make us partakers thereof. I cannot give up the Doctrines of Grace, for they are my life. I do not so much hold them as they hold me. The five fingers of the great Doctrines of Grace have enclosed my heart. I can die. But I cannot deny the imperishable Truth of God. The doctrine of the eternal choice gives forth joy as myrrh and cassia give forth perfume May you all know it!

In David's case his inward peace boiled over in holy excitement. Before the ark he was singing, he was harping, he was worshipping and at last must show it by the joyful motion of his body. His body danced because his soul danced. It was a way of worship well known in Oriental countries but we do not find it adopted, except when Miriam took a timbrel and went forth with the daughters of Israel, saying, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

As Michal would not come to lead the way, as she ought to have done, David did it himself. I think I hear him as he sings and shouts and sings again. I think I see him throwing his whole soul into the joyful motion with which he expresses his exulting joy. Election sets the soul on fire with enthusiastic delight in God. Certain doctrines would not make a mouse move one of its ears. But the grand old Doctrines of Grace stir our blood, quicken our pulse and fill our whole being with enthusiasm.

They make me "feel like singing all the time." Free Grace wakes me up at night and makes me wish that I were a nightingale. And all day long it makes me wish that I were an angel, that I might never cease my praise. O my Friends, let us praise the Lord—

***"Come, give all the glory to His holy name,
To Him all the glory belongs;
Be ours the high joy still to sound forth His fame,
And praise Him in each of our songs."***

If my salvation were of my own working, I might fitly praise myself. If I had a finger in it, I might justly praise that finger. If I reached Heaven by my own might and merits, I might justly throw up my cap in the golden streets before the cherubim. But, Brothers and Sisters, it is all of Divine Grace from first to last—and therefore we exult and rejoice and leap for joy as we praise and bless the name of God!

To conclude, David felt so exultant that he wished everybody to know of his joy in God. He told all the crowd around of his delight in God. And he sang that day, "Declare His Glory among the *heathen*, His wonders among

all people.” They speak of the narrow, selfish spirit of the Hebrews—why David had a missionary spirit and often does it flame out in his Psalms. They say that those of us who believe that we are the chosen of God are narrow and selfish. We will prove the contrary by our Evangelistic zeal. The greatest missionaries that have ever lived have believed in God’s choice of them.

And instead of this doctrine leading to inaction, it has ever been an irresistible motive power and it will be so again. It was the secret energy of the Reformation. It is because Free Grace has been put into the background that we have seen so little done in many places. It is in God’s hand the great force which can stir the Church of God to its utmost depth. It may not work superficial revivals but for deep work it is invaluable. Side by side with the blood of Christ it is the world’s hope. How can men say that the doctrine of Distinguishing Grace makes men careless about souls?

Did they never hear of the evangelical band which was called the Clapham sect? Was Whitefield a man who cared nothing for the salvation of the people? He who flew like a seraph throughout England and America unceasingly proclaiming the Grace of God—was he selfish? Yet he was distinctly a Free Grace preacher. Did Jonathan Edwards have no concern for the souls of others? Oh how he wept and cried and warned them of the wrath to come! Time would fail me to tell of the lovers of men who have been lovers of this Truth of God. This doctrine first makes sure to the man himself that he is the Lord’s and then fills him with a desire to see myriads brought to bow before the Lord of love.

Oh, that the Lord would speedily accomplish the number of His elect! Oh, that Christ might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied! O my dear Hearers, how I wish that you would all believe in the Lord Jesus unto eternal life! If you do not believe in Him yet I pray that you may do so this very day and then this very day you may share with me the exulting delight that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake!

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THE JEER OF SARCASM AND THE RETORT OF PIETY NO. 321

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 8, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus and will be base in my own sight: and of the maidservants which you have spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor.”
2 Samuel 6:20-22.*

You will remember the remarkable passage of Sacred History which I related to you this morning, how David sought on one occasion to bring up the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. But neglecting God's Law, they put the ark upon oars, instead of carrying it upon the shoulders of the Levites. And as one mistake very soon leads to another, when the oxen stumbled Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark and prevent its falling and God smote him there for his error and he died. It was an awful moment. The pulse of that vast assembly beating high with solemn festivity, receives a sudden jerk. The trumpet which erstwhile sent forth its cheerful blast, with the saved melody of cornet, of psaltery and of harp—all are hushed in one instant.

Dullness and terror seize the minds of all. They separate to their homes. The ark is carried into a private house adjoining, the residence of that eminent servant of God, Obedom and there it tarried for the space of three months. David at last recovered his spirits and a second time having carefully read over God's Law concerning the removal of the ark, he went down to the house of Obedom to carry it away. The priests this time lift up the ark upon their shoulders by means of the golden staves which passed through golden rings and so uphold the ark. Finding that they were not smitten, but that they lived and were able to carry the ark, David paused and offered seven bullocks and seven rams as a sacrifice to God.

Then, putting off his royal robe, laying aside his gown, he dressed himself like a priest, put on a linen ephod in order that he might have

ease in the exercise which he meant to take and so, in the midst of all the people, like the poorest and meanest of them, he went before the ark and playing with his harp, he danced before the Lord with all his might. While he was so doing he passed by his own house and Michal his wife, looking out, thought it was a strange thing to see the king wearing so paltry a robe as a linen ephod. She had rather see him arrayed in some goodly Babylonian garment of fine linen, or she desired to see him clothed with his usual garments and she despised him in her heart.

When he came in, the first word she uttered was a taunt—"How glorious was the king of Israel today!" then she exaggerated what he did—her spleen found vent in sarcasm. She made it out that he had behaved worse than he could have done. He had simply divested himself of his robes and acted like the rest of the people in playing before God. She accused him of immodesty. This was, of course, but a pitiful satire, he having in all things acted blamelessly, though humbly, like the rest of the people.

His reply to her was with unusual tartness. Seldom did he seem to lose his temper for a moment, but in this case he half did so at any rate. His answer was, "It was before the Lord which chose me before your father and before all his house." Thus significantly and as it were ominously, did he remind her of her pedigree. And because she had slighted her husband when he had acted in God's service according to the dictates of his heart, the Lord struck her with a curse—the greatest curse which an Eastern woman could possibly know—a curse, moreover, which wiped out the last expiring hope of her family pride—she went childless to the day of her death.

Well now, this picture is designed to teach us some wholesome lesson. I want you to look at it. You remember that old saying of ours—"We should expect some danger near, when we receive too much delight." When I see David dancing, I am quite sure there will be a darkening of his heart before long. How happy he looked! His whole countenance radiant with joy! Methinks I hear him shouting loudest of that crowd, "Sing unto the Lord, sing Psalms unto Him. Sing unto Him. Sing unto Him. Call on His holy name." And then awaking all the strings of his heart to ecstasy, he sings again, "Sing unto the Lord. Come sing unto Him. Sing Psalms unto His name."

Perhaps he was never in a more holy excitement, his spirits were all heated. He was in a flow of heavenly joy. Ah, David, there is a sting for you somewhere. Now there is a calm, but there is a tempest rising—

***"More the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests rolling overhead."***

This boy is on the threshold of a grief. He blesses the people. After he has ceased from his worship of God, he distributes to every man a flagon of wine and a loaf of bread and a good piece of flesh and they all eat and are merry before their God. And now David says, "I have blessed the people; I have made them all glad. I will go into my house and I will give them a blessing there."

But he is met on the threshold by his own wife and she in the most sarcastic manner sneers at him—"How glorious was the king of Israel today!" Poor David is angry, heart-broken and sad. His joy is scattered to

the winds for awhile. Though he puts her off with a rebuke, doubtless the irony went to his soul. The joy of that day was sorely marred—

***“A Christian man is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize,”***

So says old John Bunyan. And we may truly say, when we are at the top of a mountain, we are not far from the bottom of a valley. When we are riding on the top of one wave it is not long before we shall be in the trough of another. Uphill and downhill is the way to Heaven. Checkered must be our path. Golden shades are interwoven with a black ground. We shall have joy, but we must have trial. We shall have transport, but we must have trouble in the flesh.

This evening I am just going to discourse a little, first, about David’s trouble. Secondly, the vindication of his conduct and thirdly, his noble resolution. And my main purpose will be to stir you all up, if you are ever subject to a trial like his, to make his resolve and ground it upon his reason.

I. First, DAVID’S TROUBLE. His trouble was peculiar. It came from a quarter where he ought least to have expected it—“Oh,” says old master Frampton, “Joab smote Abner under his fifth rib—there is many a man that has been smitten in his rib, too.” Says another, “It is a strange stratagem of Satan to break a man’s head with his own bones and yet many a man has encountered such rough usage. They that have been the chief joy of our hearts have often been the means of causing us the most grievous pain.”

Has it not been to many a Christian woman that her husband has been her greatest enemy in religion and many a Christian man has found the partner of his own bosom the hardest obstacle in the road to Heaven? I will just give you some pictures such as I know to have occurred and to be occurring every day—they will suit some of you now present.

A man of God has been up to the Lord’s house. There was a great work going on—he helped that work—but when he went home, as soon as he entered the door, Michal, Saul’s daughter, was there and she said, “You are mad, you are. You are crazy. You don’t know what to do with your money. You give it away to this and to that. And you leave your children beggars. You are a fool,” said she, “you are deceived. You are gone mad with your religion.” The man put up with it and bore it patiently, though it entered into his very heart and he turned away sorely troubled.

There was another—a woman this time. She went up to the house of her Master’s Brethren and they made merry there and there was joy in that place. Her heart was carried away with elevated emotions and on her road home there was a bliss unspeakable in her soul. As soon as she entered the door the question was asked, “What brings you home so late?—why didn’t you stay out all night? You look very happy. I dare say you have been among those canting hypocrites, haven’t you?” She said nothing—brooked it patiently but the dart had gone into her heart and she felt it sorely that when she served her God with a good conscience, it should be thrown in her teeth as if she had done wrong.

There is many a young man that dances before God with all his might when he has heard about the joyous things of the Covenant of Grace. He has forgotten all his cares and all his troubles and he goes back and per-

haps this time it is his own brother, who when they retire to rest begins to ridicule him. "Where have you been today? How have you been spending your Sunday? I dare say you have been hearing So-and-So. What good can he do you? What has he got to tell you?" And there is a laugh. No names are contemptuous enough. You are called a "fool." It is supposed that no man in his senses will be a Christian. To think about eternal things is the highest mark of folly. For one short hour to turn one's thoughts away from this poor earth and muse upon things eternal is the mark of madness!

Now, we judge the madness on the other side. As we weigh the levities of this life and the realities of the life to come in the scales of judgment, the madness is found in the extreme on the other hand with the despisers and not with ourselves. The children of this world never did understand the children of the next and they never will. "The light came into the world and the darkness comprehended it not." How could it—how could darkness do anything to light except oppose it? It could not be expected that they who serve sin should love those that serve righteousness.

Oil and water will not mix. Fire and flood will never lie to sleep in the same cradle. And it cannot be expected that that man-child, the Church of God, shall have peace and be happy in the same house with that old giant, the Church of Satan—the synagogue of the devil. There must be war and lightning, there must be opposition and conflicts, while there are two natures in the world and two sorts of men.

This, then, was the trial David had to endure. And I want you to notice how peculiarly sharp this trial must have been. Natural affections are so interwoven with a thousand ligaments that they cannot be easily broken. But they are delicate as the finest nerves and can never be injured without causing the most dolorous sensation. Surely David must remember that Michal was the wife of his youth and there was gladness in his heart on the day he espoused her and after all, she had been a good wife to him in many respects. Such reflections would make her alienation from him all the harder to bear.

"Oh," he might have said, "she preserved my life once at the risk of her own, when I lay sick in bed and her father, Saul, had said, 'Bring him in the bed even as he is, that I may slay him.' Did she not let me down the wall in a basket and then lay an image in the bed and stuff the pillar with goat's hair and deceive her father that so I might escape? Ah," said he, "there was love in that woman's bosom and how long did she remain faithful while I was hunted like a partridge on the mountains."

It is true he might call to recollection that in his worst times she had forgotten him, but now she had come back to him and David sincerely loved her. For you remember that when Abner wanted to make peace with David, his stipulation was, "Except you bring Michal unto me, I will not see your face," so that he had a thorough affection for her and she had done him good.

Yet the delight of his heart is become the foe of his spirit. She it is who now laughs at him for what he had done with a pure desire to serve God and with a holy joy in doing it. Yes, that is the unkindest cut of all, that

goes to the very quick of a man when the one he loves and the one who is worth all his love, notwithstanding throws in his teeth his zeal for Christ.

Ah, Brethren, it is a happy thong when we are enabled to rejoice together in our family relationships, when husband and wife help each other on the path to Heaven. There can be no happier position than that of the Christian man who finds, in every holy wish he has for God, a helper. He finds that often she outstrips him—that when he would do something she suggests something more—when he would serve his Master there is a hint given that more yet might be done and no obstacle put in the way, but every assistance rendered. Happy is that man and blessed is he. He has received a treasure from God, the like of which could not be bought for diamonds and much fine gold could not be exchanged for it. That man is blessed of the Most High. He is Heaven's favorite and he may rejoice in the special street any beggar that likes to call himself a Christian.

But, back to our example of David's trouble—"You," says she, "you that are so cautious in everything else, you seem to have lost your head when you think about your religion." So she will be sarcastic and shoot words like arrows at that man in such a way that everyone of them may cause a wound. And now let me say here that this is more frequently done by the husband against the wife and more frequently still by the two fellow-apprentices or workmen against one another. It is a curious thing that when men are going to Hell there is no one to stop them. "Make way, make way, open the toll bars there, stand clear, do not let there be a dog in his path! Make way for him!"

Is not that the cry of the world? But here comes a man who wants to go to Heaven. "Block his path up. Throw stones in the way. Block it up, make it as difficult as ever it can be!" Yes, and good people too, good people not knowing what they are doing—they are employed by Satan to impede our path to Heaven. Poor souls, they do not know better. Satan enters into them and sets them upon us, to see if they cannot in some way or other mar our integrity because we love the whole Gospel and will not be content to have a part only. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a sore trial, but know that your afflictions are not strange or unusual. The same afflictions are accomplished in your Brethren that are in the world.

II. I shall now turn away from the consideration of the trouble, to look at holy David as he meets and encounters it. We have had David's trial. Now we will have DAVID'S JUSTIFICATION. What did David say in extenuation of what he had done? He said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house and appointed me ruler over the people, over Israel, therefore will I play before the Lord." David's justification of his acts was God's election of him. Do you not see the doctrine of election here! God had chosen him before her father Saul.

"Now," says David, "inasmuch as by special love and Divine favor I was lifted up from the common people and made a king, I will stoop down to the common people once again and I will praise my God as the people do, robed in their vestments, dancing as they dance and playing on the harp even as the rest of the joyous crowd are doing." Gratitude was the key note of his worship. Let the worldling say of the Christian when he is act-

ing true to his Master, “You are enthusiastic,” our reply is, “Yes, we are. We may be considered enthusiastic if you judge us by ordinary rules, but we are not so to be judged we consider that we have been loved with special love. That God has been pleased to forgive us our sins, to accept us of His Sovereign Grace and give us the privileges of His children—

**“Loved by our God, for Him again
With love intense we burn;
Chosen of Him before time began,
We choose Him in return.”**

We do not expect ordinary men to do for God what the Christian would, “No,” says he—

**“Love I much, I’ve more forgiven,
I’m a miracle of grace.”**

If he gives more to the cause of God than other men think of giving, still it seems very little to him, for he says—

**“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing so Divine,
Demands my soul my life, my all.”**

Michal may say we have acted madly, she would act the same if she felt as we felt. Men of the world may say we act extravagantly and go beyond the rule of prudence. They would go beyond the rule of prudence, too, if they had been partakers of like love and received like favor.

The man who feels himself to have been chosen of God from before the foundation of the world—who has a solid conviction that his sins are all blotted out, that he is God’s own child, that he is accepted in the Beloved, that his Heaven is secure—I say there is nothing extravagant for that man to do. He will go and be a missionary to the heathen, cross the seas with his life in his hands and live in the midst of a heathen population. Men say, “What for? He calls gain but a miserable pittance to sustain life, after giving up the most flowery prospects. He must be mad.” Mad no doubt you may account him, if you judge as Michal judged—but if you consider that God has chosen him and loved him with a special love, it is but reasonable, even less than might have been expected—that such a man is ready to sacrifice for Christ.

Take another example. Let me cull a picture from the memoir of one in years gone by. He preaches in a Church in Glasgow. He is just inducted into the Church, preferment lies open before him, he may speedily be made a Bishop if he likes. He seeks it not. Without miter or benefice he takes to Kennington common and Moorfields—goes to every stump and hedge in the country—so that he is Rural Dean of all the commons everywhere and Canon Residentiary nowhere. He is pelted with rotten eggs. He finds one time that his forehead has been laid open in the midst of the sermon. Why does he do it? Men say he is fanatical. What did Whitfield need to do this for? What did John Wesley need to go all over the country for? Why, there is the Rev. Mr. So-and-so, with his fourteen livings and never preaches at all—good man he is.

“Oh,” say the world, “and he makes a good thing of it, depend upon it.” That is a common saying, “He makes a good thing of it.” And when he died, he did make a good thing of it, for he silenced the tongue of slander,

leaving nothing but an imperishable reputation behind. When Mr. Wesley was laboring abundantly, they said, "He is a rich man." And taxed him for his plate very heavily. He said, "You may take my plate at any rate if you like, for all I have is two silver spoons. I have one in London and one in York and by the grace of God, I shall never have any more as long as there are poor people about."

But the people said, "Depend upon it, they are making a good thing of it. Why cannot they be still as other people?" The only reason why they could not was just this—that God had chosen them before the rest of mankind. They felt that they were special objects of Divine favor and they knew their calling—it was not only to make them blessed, but to make them a blessing. What other men could not do, or would not do, they did—they could not rest before they did it. They could dance like David before the ark, degrading the clerical character. They could bring down the fine dignity of the parson, to stand like a mountebank before the shows of Moorfields, or in the Spafields' riding-schools.

They could come down on stage boards to preach the Gospel. They were not ashamed to be like David, shamelessly uncovering themselves like lewd fellows, in the eyes of the handmaidens of their servants—they thought all this disgrace was honor and all this shame was glory and they bore it all, for their justification was found in the fact that they believed God had chosen them. And therefore they chose to suffer for Christ's sake, rather than reign without Christ.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, I say this to you—if you think God has chosen you and yet do not feel that He has done great things for you, or holds any strong claims upon your gratitude, then shun the Cross. If you have never had much forgiven, get over the stile and go down the green land into Bye Path Meadow. If is comfortable walking, go down there. If you do not owe much to the Lord Jesus Christ, shirk His service. Go up in the corner there when the trumpet plays and tell Michal you are very sorry you have displeased her. Say, "I will never do the like again, trust me. I am sorry you do not like it. I hope you will now forgive me. But as I hold religion to be a thing to please everyone as well as myself, I will never dance before the ark again."

Do that now if you are under no very great obligation to the Father of spirits and have never tasted the distinguishing love of God to your souls. But oh, my dear Brethren, there are some of you ready to start up from your seats and say, "Well I am not that man!" and assuredly, as your pastor, I can look on some of you that have had much forgiven. Not long ago you were up to the throat in drunkenness. You could blaspheme God. Not very long ago, perhaps, you carried on dishonesty and never entered the House of God. Some of you were frivolous, gay, careless, despisers of God, without hope without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel.

Well, and what brought you here now? Why, Sovereign Grace has done it. You would not have been here if you had been left to yourselves. If God had done no more for you than for other men, you would have been left to go on in the same course as before. Now the shutters are closed. That shop which used to be open all day Sunday is closed. Now the pipe and the beer, or dissipation's more refined, that used to occupy the whole of

the Sunday afternoon, with five or six jolly companions, are put away. And there is the Bible and there is prayer now and now the oath is not heard as before. I suppose you set this change of character down to Sovereign Grace and you are ready to sing with all of us—

***“Grace led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road,
And new supplies each hour I meet
While pressing on to God.”***

Then the mercy you have received is a complete justification for anything that you may do in God’s service, any ecstasy that you may feel when you are worshipping Him and any excess of liberality you may display when you are engaged in pressing on to the kingdom of your Lord and Master. If the Church could once feel this, what an influence it would exert! Truly, I may say, without the slightest flattery, I never met with any people on the face of the earth who seemed to have a more thorough belief in this fact—who lived more truly up to this doctrine—that chosen of God and loved with special love, they should do extraordinary things—than those among whom I minister. I have often gone on my knees before God to thank Him for the wondrous things I have seen done by some of the Christians now present.

In service they have gone beyond anything I could have asked. I should think that they would have considered me unreasonable if I had requested it. They have done it without request. At the risk of everything they have served their Master and not only spent all that they could spare, but have even spared what they could ill afford to spare for the service of Jesus. They have given up social comfort and personal ease that they might be serving their Master. Such Brethren doubtless meet their reward and if any should say of them, “It is ridiculous. It is absurd—they are carried away with fanatical zeal,” I put this answer in their mouths, “Yes, I should be ridiculous, I should be absurd, if I owed no more to God than you. But He has loved me so that I cannot love Him enough, much less love Him too much. He has loved me at such a rate that I cannot do too much for Him. In fact I feel I cannot do half enough.” You being special characters you have given to God special service and God bless you for it. Yes, He does bless you in it. Such was David’s justification.

III. Not less worthy of our notice was his RESOLUTION, of which I now come briefly to speak. What did he say? Did he draw back and play the coward? Did he bend his back to the lash of rebuke and give up the extravagances of his devotion? No. He said, and said frankly, “I will yet be more vile than thus and I will be base in mine own sight,” and so forth. Now God grant your resolution may be the same. Whenever the world reproaches you, say, “Well, I thank you for that word, I will strive to deserve it better—if I have incurred your displeasure by my consistency, I will be more consistent and you shall be more displeased, if you will.

“If it is a vile thing to serve Christ, I will serve Him more than I have ever done and be viler still. If it is disgraceful to be numbered with the poor, tried and afflicted people, I will be disgraced. No, the more disgraced I am, the more happy shall I be. I shall feel that disgrace is honor, that ignominy is glory, that shame and spitting from the lips of enemies is but the same thing as praise and glory from the mouth of Christ.” Instead of

yielding, go forward—show your enemies that you do not know how to go back—that you are not made of the soft metal of these modern times.

It is said by an old writer that in the olden times men used to take care of their houses, but now the houses take care of the men. That they used to eat off oaken porringers and then they were oaken men. But now they are willow men—they can bend. They are earthenware men, which can be dashed to pieces. Scarcely in politics, in business, or in religion, have you got a man. You see a lot of things which are called men—who turn the way the wind blows. A number of preachers that turn north, south, east and west, just according as the times shall dictate and their circumstances and the hope of gain shall drift them. I pray God to send a few men with what the Americans call “grit” in them—men who when they know a thing to be right, will not turn away, or turn aside, or stop. Men who will persevere all the more because there are difficulties to meet or foes to encounter. Men who stand all the more true to their Master because they are opposed—who, the more they are thrust into the fire, the hotter they become. Men who, just like the bow, the further the string is drawn, the more powerfully will it send forth its arrows and so, the more they are trod upon, the more mighty will they become in the cause of the Truth of God against error.

Resolve, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in any sort of persecution, to face it with a full countenance. Like a nettle is the persecutor, touch it gently and it will sting you, but grasp it and it hurts you not. Lay hold of those who oppose you, not with rough vengeance, but with the strong grip of quiet decision and you have won the day. Yield no principle, no, not the breadth of a hair of that principle. Stand up for every solitary grain of truth—contend for it as for your life. Remember your forefathers—not merely your Christian forefathers but those who are your progenitors in the faith as Baptists.

Remember those who of old were cast out of the Christian Church with contempt because they would not bend to the errors of their times. Think of the snows of the Alps and call to mind the Waldenses and the Albigenses, your great fore-runners. Think again, of the Lollard’s, the disciples of Wickliffe. Think of your Brethren in Germany, who, not many centuries, no, but a century ago, were sewn up in sacks, had their hands chopped off and bled and died—a glorious list of martyrs.

Your whole pedigree, from the beginning to the end is stained with blood. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of Heaven has been made to suffer the violence of men. And you! Will you yield? Shall these soft times, these gentle ages, take away your pristine valor—make you the coward sons of heroic flatbeds? No—if you are not called to the sufferings of a martyr—yet bear the spirit of a martyr. If you cannot burn as he did in the flesh, burn as he did in the spirit. If you have nothing to endure but the trial of cruel mockings, take it patiently, endure it joyfully, for happy are you, inasmuch as you are made partakers of the sufferings of your Divine Master.

Never, I entreat of you, grow faint in your course, but bring more of the love of your hearts into the service of your lives. Never yield one little bit of the Truth which God has committed to you. Take up the Cross and bear

it. However weighty, however ignominious, carry it manfully. If the father is turned against the child and the child against the father, weep over it and mourn it. If the husband is turned against the wife and the wife against the husband, take care that it is not through your own fault. But if it is for Christ's sake, bear it joyfully, bear it with transport and delight. You are highly honored. You cannot wear the ruby gown of martyrdom and fire—that blazing diadem—but you have got at least a stray jewel out of it. Thank God for it and never shrink, never blush to suffer for His name's sake.

And give to every laughing Michal the answer, "If this is vile, I purpose to be viler still. If this is shameful, I will be more shameful. If this excite your derision, you shall laugh louder than ever. Your opportunities for making fun of me shall never be wanting, till your disposition to ridicule shall be changed."

Oh, that is a glorious way of dealing with adversaries. Is a lion roaring at you? Look at him and smile and he will leave off roaring by-and-by. When some big dog comes out to bark at you, keep quiet, it is marvelous how easily he is tamed. I was once staying in the north of Scotland where there was a ferocious dog chained up. He came out and I patted him and he jumped up with his fore-feet upon me. I caressed him and he seemed particularly fond of me. The master came out. "Come away, my dear Sir," said he, "That dog will rend you to pieces." But I did not know it and when I passed by he seemed to know I was not at all afraid of him, so he didn't meddle with me.

In like manner, Christians, be not terrified at your adversaries. They may growl, or they may snarl, but do not you shrink back with fear. It will make them bark the more. Take as little notice of them as possible. Ah, poor things, you can well say, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Just leave them all alone and if they must know the reason tell them what David told Michal—God has chosen you to show forth His praise. I dare say you may be insane enough in their eyes. A good friend of mine, when he was told he was mad, said, "Well, if I am mad you ought to be very patient with me, for fear I should grow worse. If I am mad now, perhaps I might grow wild. So be gentle with me."

There is a good-humored way of rallying in return—only it must be without bitterness. Tell the people who take needless offense they must try to teach you better. If you have gone so far astray they ought to lead you back again. By degrees they will have done with this raillery and begin to respect you. If there is one in a family that is looked up to most of all, it is usually that one which all the family abused at one time. He has borne the brunt of opposition. He has held his ground. And he has won the palm of consistency. Give way an inch and you will have to give way a mile. Yield a single yard and your enemy will drive you out. Stand right still—calmly, quietly with the determination that you can die—but you will not fly, that you could suffer anything, but you could not deny your Master—and your victory is won.

Never forget to give thanks to God if you are a child of pious parents who, so far from opposing you, have done all they could to help you. Be very thankful for it—as a privilege to be prized—because so many lack it.

It is a happy thing for some of you flowers that grow in a conservatory where the air is so very warm and so very mild. But there are some who have to be outside in the frost—pray for these. When you think of the sheep in the fold, take care that you think of those out in the wilderness exposed to the snow-storm coming on, perhaps buried in a hollow and ready to expire. Think of them. You may suppose there is very little suffering for Christ now. I speak what I know—there is a vast deal of suffering still.

I do not mean burning, I do not mean hanging. I do not mean persecution by law. It is a sort of slow martyrdom. I can tell you how it is effected. Everything a young man does is thrown in his teeth. Things harmless and indifferent in themselves are twisted into accusation that he does wrong. If he speaks, his words are brought up against him. If he is silent it is worse. Whatever he does is misrepresented and from morning to night there is the taunt always ready. Everything that can be said against his minister is generally used—because the world knows when they find fault with the minister—it stings the people, if they are a loving people, to the quick.

And there are insinuations thrown out against the minister for his motives and there are all things said about God's people, too. One says the minister is a "yes-no" preacher. Another says he is too high in doctrine. One will accuse him of being sanctimonious. Another will charge him with laxness. Ah, Brethren, you need not fear, you can bear witness for the Truth of God whatever is said—you must bear with the slanderer and forbear. If they throw anything in your teeth, still stand up for your Lord Jesus. I don't ask you to stand up for *me*. You will do that, I know. Stand up for your Lord and Master. Don't yield a single inch and the day shall come when you shall have honor even in the eyes of those who in the world once laughed at you and put you to open shame.

Before closing, let me just say a word or two more generally to this whole congregation. There are three sorts of people upon which my text looks with a dark and appalling frown. First, there are those whose lips are ever quick to curl, whose countenance is ever prompt to sneer, whose tongues are ever ready with a jest profane when the service of God crosses their path. I only say to you, beware, lest that come upon you—"As he loved cursing, so let it come upon him—as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him."

Secondly, there are those who up to a certain point favor the worship of God and the services of the Church. But there comes a season of extraordinary service, a revival that demands uncommon energy—and almost before they are themselves aware of it, the repugnance of their hearts finds some strong and unkindly expression. Now let me point you to Saul's daughter and remind you how in one hour she proved her pedigree, identified herself with a family which the Lord had rejected and sealed her own irrevocable doom.

Then, thirdly, there is the professor of religion, who with David's trial is awaiting David's constancy. Have I sown the seed of Gospel Truth broadcast among you so often and has none fallen in stony places? You may have heard the Word and later with joy received it. And you may have

“cured awhile, though you have no root in yourselves.” But let me ask you, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, are you offended? Does it prove a stumbling block to you? If so, your case is deplorable. Do you parry off the first breath of ridicule with flippant tongue? Did I hear that you said the other day, “Oh, I don’t profess anything. I only just go into that Chapel now and then to hear the preacher. He rather takes my fancy.” What? Young man, let your conscience witness that you are shrinking back unworthily. You may only dissemble a little at first, but if you are coward enough to dissemble, you may before long prove infidel enough to apostatize.

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake.” Amen.

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MARROW AND FATNESS

NO. 1166

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 29, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Then went King David in, and sat before the lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me up to now? And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord God, but You have spoken also of Your servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto You? for You, Lord God, know Your servant. For Your word’s sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O Lord God: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”
2 Samuel 7:18-22.

DAVID was overwhelmed with the mercy of God! Nathan’s message was too much for him. He felt emotions in his bosom which he could not express. Like a wise man, he went at once, while under the impulse of gratitude, into the place of nearness to God. It was not everyone who might go in and sit before the Lord as he did, but he felt he had a special call to draw near unto the Most High—and there he sat down in the posture of waiting to receive the fulfillment of what was promised, in the posture of rest—as one who had, now, all that he could desire and was pressed down under the weight of blessing. Yet the Psalmist’s sitting was also a posture of worship and surely of all passages of Scripture none can be said to contain more true adoration than that which is now before us.

The king sat, however, before the Lord. The mercy had all come from God and therefore to God all his praise was offered. His soul waited only upon the Lord, because his expectation was alone from Him. He was conscious of being in the sacred Presence and he sat there, feeling that by the Covenant Blessing he had been brought very near, and his spirit exulted in that nearness! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, the mercies which God has shown to *us* are as great as those which He manifested to His servant David! And if the Spirit of God has opened our eyes to see and understand them, we may, this morning, ardently wish to do precisely what David did.

Let us have boldness to enter into the nearest possible fellowship with God—yes, let us go where David could not go—within the veil, and there, where Christ has opened up the way through His torn body, let us sit down in a restful, waiting, happy spirit, and give full play to all those Divine emotions which ought to be awakened by reflecting upon the loving-kindness of the Lord!

I have selected this subject because there are many among us who have lately found the Savior and it is well to let them see the happiness

which belongs to them—the pleasures and the treasures which are theirs in Christ Jesus—that they may render unto the God of Grace the glory which is due unto His name. David did not understand the words of Nathan to relate merely to his dynasty and to his dominion over the house of Israel. He looked far beyond temporal things—and therefore, in the words before us, there is a *spiritual* depth which will not strike the eye of the casual reader. The New Testament must be the expositor of the Old, and Peter, in his famous sermon gives us the key to this passage!

Turn to Acts 2:29 and you will find that Peter accounts for a memorable utterance of David in the Psalms by declaring that he was a Prophet, and knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne. The joy which filled David's bosom was a *spiritual* one because he knew that Jesus would come of his race—and that an everlasting kingdom would be set up in His Person—and in Him should the Gentiles trust.

Now, then, we also, being blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, are bound to feel as David felt, and therefore we shall pass in review, David's expressions, with the desire that we may drop into the same mood. May God the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to do so, bless our meditation at this time.

I. First I shall need you to notice THE HUMILITY apparent in David's words. "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, *Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that You have brought me up to now?*" First, he acknowledged *the lowliness of his origin*—"What is my house?" He came not of royal blood. Nathan spoke the Truth of God when he said in the Lord's name, "I took you from the sheepcote, from following the sheep." David was but a humble shepherd lad when he was first anointed—and after that anointing he continued in that humble office. From this he rose to become the leader of a motley band of free-lances exiled from their country. Yet the Lord was pleased to call him from his low estate to make him king over the chosen people!

Beloved, what is *our* origin? What is there about our descent that could claim for us the high privilege of being sons of God? Trace our origin to its most ancient source and behold, SIN is there, staining the escutcheon of our house! All down the line there is a taint of high treason against the Divine Majesty. We come of a race of rebels and our own personal birth was marred with sin. Heraldry lends no pomp to us—and the genealogy for the most of us reveals no hereditary glories—and even if it did, it would be mere fancies and fictions not worthy to be mentioned before the Presence of the Lord. "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house?"

David laid the most stress upon *his own personal unworthiness*. He said, "Who am I? What was there in *me* that You should make *me* a king and a progenitor of the Christ?" And will not each Believer here say the same? Who am I? What is there in *me*? God might have chosen the great and the mighty of the world, but He has passed them by. He might have chosen the learned and famous, but not many of them are called. He has chosen the poor of this world and things that are despised. Yes, the base

things has God chosen, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh might glory in His Presence. Look at yourself from head to foot—examine every crevice of your heart, and every single feature of your character—can you see *anything* there that might command Jehovah's esteem? Do you see *any* qualifications for being bought with redeeming blood? Are there any reasons, that you can find, why you should be made sons of God, and heirs of Glory?

The Lord had reasons for choosing you, for He acts according to the counsel of His will, but those reasons are not in *you*—they lie in His own bosom and you must exclaim—“Who am I that You have brought me up to now?” I have no doubt that David looked upon his own deservings—what if I correct myself and say his own *undeservings*?—and marveled that the Lord had chosen him and rejected Saul! He was a man after God's own heart, but his conduct was that of a bold, rough soldier—and he could not look upon it without observing its imperfections. He prayed, in the 25th Psalm, “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Your mercy remember You me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord.” These sins are not recorded in the chronicles of his life, but they were written in his own penitent memory. And being humbled concerning them he cried, “Who am I?”

There must have been many an action in his exile and wanderings which he did not rejoice to remember. For instance, his mimicry of madness before the king of Gath. His great anger against Nabal. His affinity with the Philistines. And besides such prominent errors as these, he could see many failings and transgressions all along—and these both made the Grace of God the more illustrious and led him to cry from his very heart—“Who am I, O Lord God?” Now, Brothers and Sisters, look back upon your own lives *before* conversion. What were they? Let them be blotted out with tears! Consider your lives *since* conversion and confess that whenever you have been left to yourselves and the Grace of God has withdrawn for a while, you have always stumbled into some form or other of deplorable folly. Who am I? What have I done? What have I been? How is it that I am made Your child, purchased with the blood of Jesus, and made an heir of Heaven? We may sum it all up in that exclamation, “Why *me*, Lord?”—

**“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter where there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”**

There is something very interesting in the expression, “Who am I, O Lord God?” David's sense of *his own nothingness* is strikingly set forth by putting the, “I,” side by side with, “O Lord God.” “I David, Jesse's son, the shepherd's boy, who am I, O You infinite, all-commanding Jehovah, Creator, Preserver, Lord over all? How can I stand in Your Presence? I shrink to *nothing* there! Did I not come of You? Do I not owe all to You? Are You not the very breath of my nostrils? I am a nothing, a very dream, a thing of nothing and yet You look upon me! And You shower down Your mercies upon me! With a flood of blessedness do You carry me away. Who am I, O

Lord God, and what is my house?" Thus you see David's humility under a sense of mercy.

And let us remark, here, that nothing humbles a man like the mercy of God! Unkind, ungenerous remarks do not humble the soul—they rather gender pride. Under the criticisms of unkindness a man who is a man finds all that is strong within him coming to the front, and, as in Job's case, self-assertion straightway leads the van. Reproach and rebuke tend, rather, to make men proud than humble. Love is the melting power. Nothing weighs a man down like a load of blessing. When you see God blotting out your sin, accounting you righteous in His sight, for Jesus' sake, and saying to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you," where is boasting, then? It is excluded! Love shows boasting to the door and bars its return.

Peter was ready enough to speak of what he had done, but in the Presence of his loving Lord, when he saw his ship sinking through the plenteous catch of fishes, he knelt down and cried in deep humiliation, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—

***"The more Your glories strike my eyes
The humbler I shall lie."***

A sight of the Glory and mercy of God is sure to produce in us a sense of shame for our ill-desert—combined with wonder that God should have so much as a single kind look for us! Sit down, then, children of God, and review His mercy and be humbled! Do not deny yourselves the joyful review because of a jealous fear of being exalted by it. Never endorse the great lie of the self-righteous, that full assurance of faith leads men to presumption! It does no such thing! By God's Grace it humbles a man, makes him feel his own unworthiness, and so leads him to walk more carefully and prayerfully before his God. It is in this point that faith makes us strong, for while it exalts our joys, it slays our pride and makes us shrink to nothing before the great ALL IN ALL.

II. Now observe, secondly, David's WONDERING GRATITUDE. He wondered, first, *at what God had done for him*—"What is my house, that You have brought me up to now?—to a house of cedar, and to be able to talk about building a house for You. To be Your chosen king and to have my seed established on my throne, and to become the ancestor of the Christ! Come, Brothers and Sisters, you do not need me to preach to you here! I should like to sit down and leave you to muse upon what the Lord has done in bringing *you* up to now—up from the pit of destruction, up from the miry clay of your depravity, out of the horrible prison of your dread of Divine wrath—away from the Egypt of darkness and bondage into light and liberty!

What an almighty work it was that brought you from darkness into light, from death into life! Bless the Lord for this. Praise Him for your calling when effectually He drew you and you ran unto Him weeping and singing! Praise Him for your pardon when He washed you in the blood and you were clean—and you knew you were! Wonder of wonders is this! Praise Him for your justification, when He took the robe the Savior wore

and dressed you with it—never was a bride arrayed by the most loving bridegroom! Praise Him for your regeneration, when you were born into a new world! Praise Him for your being set apart for holy uses, admitted to new company, filled with holy joys, instructed in heavenly truths and dedicated to sacred duties!

Praise Him for sanctification which has made you worthy to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! Praise Him for the preservation from sin which you have, up to now, received—and the education for eternity which has so happily commenced! Praise Him for the provision so bounteous with which He has furnished a table in the wilderness, both temporally and spiritually! And praise Him for the protection with which He has warded off the arrow that flies by day, and the pestilence that walks in darkness. O Lord, I bless You that You have brought me up to now! Sometimes, when I take a view of what God has done for me, I feel like Christian when he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death by night.

Remember how Bunyan pictures the scene? A narrow pathway with a pit on this side and a deep morass on that—on all sides hobgoblins, dragons, and spirits of the deep seeking to destroy him. His sword is useless and therefore put away in its sheath. No weapon in his hand but that of All-Prayer, which he found to be equal to the emergency. And when he had gone through it, and the sun rose on him, and he looked back, he could not believe his eyes that he passed through it! And truly, at this moment, looking back on life with its innumerable temptations, and remembering the tendency to yield that is within every one of us, we can each one sing as Christian did—

***“Oh, world of wonders (I can say no less),
That I should be preserved in that distress
That I have met with here!
Oh, blessed be
That hand which from it has delivered me!
Dangers in darkness, devils, Hell, and sin,
Did compass me, while I this vale was in:
Yes, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets did lie
My path about, that worthless, silly I
Might have been caught, entangled, and cast down,
But, since I live, let Jesus wear the crown.”***

David did not end his wonder there, but went on to another and greater theme—the *blessings which the Lord had promised him*. He praised the Lord for what He had laid up as well as for what He had laid out. He said, and mark the words, “And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord God, but You have spoken also of Your servant’s house for a great while to come.” What a wonderful expression! “And this was yet a small thing in Your sight.” It sometimes appears as if every mercy the Lord brings us is meant to eclipse those which have gone before! For instance, He gives a sinner pardon, and the soul is, for a time, perfectly content with cleansing and expects nothing more. But soon it learns that there is such a thing as *justification*—when it comes to be just with God, complete in Christ and

accepted in the Beloved—then it rejoices anew as if pardon were but a small thing compared with justification!

And lo, before our eyes have fully drunk in the beauty of justification, we hear the Word which says, “A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you: I will write My Law in your hearts, and you shall not depart from Me,” and our hearts are carried away with the splendors of *sanctification*! Scarcely, however, have we been fully made aware of the extent of *this* blessing before another portion of the royal regalia is uncovered, and we hear it said, “They shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty,” and now we understand that we are *adopted*—we are children of God!

But before we fully understand this great privilege we begin to hear the song whose swell is like that of many waters, “He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign forever and ever.” And then we see the royal prerogative, the priestly dignity which God has put upon us—yes, and long before even *these* mercies are perfectly understood we are called away to see the heavenly joys, compared with which all else will seem to be yet a small thing! I beg you, my Brothers and Sisters, to remember, today, that your God has spoken of you for a great while to come! He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Is not that for a great while to come? He has bid you say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Is not that for a great while to come? He has promised to give you all you ever shall require. “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Note well that text ever to be remembered, “Because I live you shall live also,” and that petition of our Lord, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory.” These, and a hundred more gracious Words all concern a great while to come!

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you have not obtained transient blessings—blessings which will be gone tomorrow—gifts which will decay as the year grows old and the autumn leaves flutter to the ground! You have not obtained a mercy which will leave you when you tremble in decrepitude! No, rather, when you are old and gray-headed your God will not forsake you! You shall still bring forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you; the floods shall not overflow you.” Therefore may you boldly say, “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

When you die you shall rise again! In your flesh you shall see God and shall rejoice before Him. Yes, forever shall you be satisfied when you wake up in His likeness. You shall go into everlasting joy and so shall be forever with the Lord. He has spoken to you for a great while to come. Sit down and wonder—wonder and adore for evermore!—

***“Firm as the lasting hills,
This covenant shall endure,
Whose potent shalls and wills***

***Make every blessing sure:
When ruin shakes all Nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same.***

David had yet another theme for wonder, which was this—*the manner of the giving of all this*. There is often as much in the manner of a gift as in a gift itself. I have known some who could refuse a favor and give greater pleasure by their kindly-worded denial than others by their rude consent. Now here is a mercy of which the way of giving it is, if possible, more astounding than the mercy itself, though that is amazing beyond measure, for David says, “And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” The word in the Hebrew is, “law.” It is never translated, except in this case, by the word, “manner,” and we may keep to the word, “law,” if we like—“Is this the law of man, O Lord God?” We will render the passage first according to the authorized version—“Is this the *manner* of man?” Does man act like this? Does man pitch his love upon the unworthy? Does man exalt the lowest to the highest place?

Does man forgive transgressions and continue to do so? Does man bear provocation and return love for offenses? Is man so faithful? Is man so bounteous? Oh, man can never be Divine, and therefore man can never come up to the infinity of Your Grace, O Lord God. This is not after the manner of man, neither is it after the law of man, for the law of Adam is, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die.” Punishment follows quick on the heels of sin. Free Grace is not the law of the first man—it is the law of another man, the Second Adam—and so some render the passage, “This is the law of the Man,” the Man Christ Jesus, the true Adam. We will not contend for that rendering, but it contains a Truth of God which we will now utter in our own words.

It is not the law of man, it is the law of Grace, the law of infinite mercy, the law of infallible faithfulness, the law of immutable love. Beloved, if it had not been revealed to you, you could never have imagined or dreamed of such a fullness of Grace as the Lord has actually made to pass before you. It is more marvelous than romance! It may well make your heart exult, for it is astonishing beyond all measure. Jonathan Edwards, when defending the great Calvinistic theory, made use of language somewhat to this effect—“You tell one that the Doctrines of Grace are a dream. Then, if it is so, you ought to join with me in perpetual regret that it is so.” I venture to say, let the earth be hung in sackcloth if there is no Covenant of Grace, no way of salvation by redemption—for it is the most charming of conceptions—and brings to mankind the most extraordinary of blessings.

If this is dreaming, let me dream on, my God, forever! Eternal love welling up in infinite blessing to the chosen race—pouring forth, forever, inexhaustible rivers of mercy—is far above all that man could of himself have imagined! Poetry has never soared within a myriad leagues of such an imagination! I am more than content with the Covenant Love of my God. I ask for nothing else. This fills my soul and satisfies my spirit, and I would sit down before You, my Father, and say, “Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” Infinite love granting infinite blessings! The Gospel

must be true! It bears its own witness upon its very brow, for who could have made it up? Where is the imagination that could have conceived such majestic mercy as God reveals unto His people?

III. Now, changing the note and yet continuing in the same strain, we have to speak of David's emotion of love. I almost regret that I have to speak to you. I wish I could sit still and yet make you feel what I feel. If there could be some electric action by which thought could be communicated without words, it would suit my mood exactly at this moment. David found but a scant outlet for his love. What precious words are these—*"What can David say more?"* It is Love struck dumb by receiving an unspeakable gift. The king was exactly in the same case as Paul when he said, "What shall we then say to these things?" To that question no answer was ever given by Love. Love sat silent after she had asked it, speechless in adoration—but Faith pushed himself forward and cried, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" But Love was silent, dumfounded with the mass of mercy.

So David says, "What can David say more?" Certainly no eloquence can match the silence of human love abashed by Divine Love. Sit down, O you saints, and cry, "What can Your servants say?" Notice the childlikeness of this love. "What can *David* say more?" Your little child, if she is ill, will not say, "Mother, nurse me," but, "Mother, nurse poor little Mary." And when she feels very sick she will say, "Mary's head aches." Your little John, when he wants you to play with him will say, "Please, Father, take little John on your knee," or, "Please, Father, take John for a walk." It is the way *children* talk, and this is David's child-talk to God. "What shall David say more?" He might have said, "What shall *I* say more?" But Love taught him a simple and sweet speech which he delighted to use.

Observe, it is a love which longs for communion and enjoys it. He says, "What can David say more *unto You?*" He can talk to other people, but he does not quite know how to speak to God. And then he adds, "For You, Lord God, know Your servant," which is a parallel passage to that of Peter, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I love you," as if he could not speak his heart, but his Master could read it—and he besought the Lord to act as his interpreter. Such thoughts as those which were in David's mind break the backs of words and stagger speech! Tongues are an after-thought, hearts come first—and oftentimes hearts wish they could fly away from tongues. Language is but a feeble wing, we want to ride the lightning—

***"Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above,"***

has often been our cry. We are right enough in thinking that we can never express ourselves till we get to Heaven. How does John Berridge put it in that singular hymn? I do not know if I can recall it on the spur of the moment. Yes, here it is—

***"Then my tongue would fain express
All His love and loveliness.
But I lisp and falter forth***

***Broken words not half His worth.
Vex'd I try and try again,
Still my efforts all are vain:
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."***

Death must unloose these stammering tongues or they will never be able to speak all that we feel when Divine Love casts us into joyous raptures! Strip us of this camber and we will be seraphs in their burning hymns, and even the heavenly harps shall learn from us how to magnify the Lord! Till then we must be content to cry with David, "What can we say more? You, Lord, know Your servants." But do you see it is *obedient* love as well? It is not mere sentiment, there is a practicalness about it, for he says, "Lord, you know *your servant*"—he subscribes himself as henceforth bound to God's service. With delight he puts on his Master's livery and sits like a servitor in the hall of the King of kings, waiting to hear what shall be spoken to him. As the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, so his eyes are up to his God.

Therefore it is that David was known in later times to sing, "O Lord I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." He had caught the spirit of the Christian proverb, "To serve God is to reign." He loved to do homage at the feet of his Sovereign Lord and yield himself and all that he had as a reasonable service to him who had crowned him with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Warm love always urges the soul to service. None are so ready to wear the yoke of Christ as those who have leaned on His bosom. The nearer we come to our Father's heart the more submissive we are to His commands. Free Grace is the best atmosphere in which to grow strong in obedience. The more often we consider what we owe to Eternal Love the more ready we shall be to pay our vows unto the Lord.

How he dwells upon those words, "You, Lord God." What pleasure he finds in the very name of his Benefactor and Master. All through Scripture we ought to notice the titles by which God is called in each distinct place. We are so poverty-stricken in thought that we generally use but one name for God—not so the rich soul of David! Throughout the Psalms you will find him appropriately ringing the changes upon Adonai, El, Elohim, Jehovah, and all the varied combinations of names which loving hearts were known to give to the glorious Lord of Hosts! And here he says, "You, Lord God." He delights in *God* and finds music in His name! He is affluent in ascriptions and titles because his soul is rich in affection. His love was reverent love, adoring love, meditative love, intelligent love, whole-hearted love. It expresses itself by reverence when it fails to compass infinite mercy by descriptions.

I want every Believer here to be sweetly stirred with this love this morning! I would have you go home and spend an hour this afternoon in contemplating the ever-blessed God who has done so much for you that you may well say, "What can David say more unto You?" My time is flying, but I must have space for another point. David's language is so rich that truly,

as I take up these words one by one, I feel as if I could say with the Psalmist, "My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness." Have we not marrow and fatness here?

IV. David's heart was full of PRAISE, and the praise was first for the *freeness of the Grace* which brought him such blessedness. "For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart have You done all these great things." Whenever the Believer asks why God gave him Grace in Christ Jesus he can only resort to one answer—the Lord's own heart has devised and ordained our salvation. Why did the Lord love *you*, my Brothers and Sisters? Because He would love you is the only possible reply. In the book of Deuteronomy, seventh chapter and seventh and eighth verses, we have this self-contained love set forth. The Lord did not love the people because they were numerous, but because He loved them. His *love* was its own reason. He loved us because He would love us, "according to His own heart."

Now, this is one of the things which always must astound us and make us love God, that everything comes from Him spontaneously, without anything in us that could produce it or call it forth. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," rolls like thunder over the *rebel's* head—but to a child of God it is full of music—so that voice of the Lord is full of majesty to him! Oh, wonder of wonders, that He who passed the fallen angels by, nevertheless stooped to save unworthy men, for so it seemed good in His sight! David praised also the *faithfulness* of God. He says, "For Your word's sake." Is not that the ground upon which *all* mercy is received by the child of God? God has promised it and will keep His word. He never did run back from His Covenant yet—

***"As well might He His being quit
As break His promise or forget."***

Jehovah must be true. Oh, what a faithful God has He been to many of us! We can recount the scores and hundreds of times when, if the promise had failed, the disaster would have been irretrievable—but it never has failed. Not one good thing has failed of all that the Lord God has promised.

You men of 70, you can say that! We who are but lads in the army are, nevertheless, bold to avow the same! He has helped in every need and never yet has He been backward in coming to our rescue or supplying our necessities. Glory be to His name! Let us sit down and adore His faithfulness. Here we may, also, see David discerning the connection between Divine mercy and the Lord Jesus Christ. What if I read it so—"For YOUR WORD'S sake"—for the sake of the Eternal Logos, the Word that was God, and was with God—for HIS sake all these mercies have come to us! It is very sweet to see the mark of the pierced hands on every Covenant Blessing, to receive every blessing from the hand that was nailed to the tree for us, and to feel—

***"There's ne'er a gift His hand bestows,
But cost His heart a groan."***

This will lead us to praise God for the freeness of the mercy, for the faithfulness of the mercy and for the mediatorial Grace by which every mercy comes to us.

Then the king's heart was taken up with the greatness of the Covenant Blessings. "According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." They were all great. There was not a little mercy among them. All the mercies which we great sinners receive from our great God are inconceivably great and therefore demand from us the greatest thankfulness. Dwell on the great deliverances, the great promises, the great comforts, the great expectations of the children of God till your souls are enlarged with gratitude! Once more, David praised God for *His condescending familiarity*. "According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them." They were revealed to David by a Prophet, just as Jesus communed with His disciples, and said, "I have told you before it came to pass, that when it is come to pass you may believe."

And yet again, "If it were not so I would have told you." God's mercies are instructions to us. We never know them till God brings them to us and makes us know them—they are their own interpreters. Like letters written in cipher they have the clue within themselves. As the prophecies are never understood till they are fulfilled, so the mercies of God are never understood till they are received. *Experience* teaches. Experience is the master doctor in the University of Christ. When you know Him by testing and handling Him, then is Jesus sweet! When you know His power by testing it in weakness, then you understand its exceeding greatness! When you know His faithfulness in deep affliction and great need, then you see it! And when you taste His mercy under a sense of great sin, then you weep with joy as you perceive it!

God alone can make His servants know His gifts. Blessed be God, who alone teaches us to profit, and makes His own dear children to sit at His feet. Has He not said it, "They shall all be taught of the Lord." No school like this! May I forever be a scholar in it—on the lowest form in that school I would be content to sit and learn eternally! Now give your souls to the sacred lesson. Praise and magnify your God, O you that love His name!

V. To conclude, not for lack of matter, however, but for lack of time—David's soul was wound up to HIGH THOUGHTS OF GOD, for our text concludes with these words—"Therefore you are great, O Lord God: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You, according to all that we have heard with our ears." God is great! He is the greatest because He is the best! The old Romans used to say, *optimus maximus*—the best, the greatest. You, God, are good, and therefore You are great. As we drink in the sense of His goodness we cannot help saying, "Therefore You are great, O Lord God"—great positively! Then great comparatively—"there is none like You." Yes, greatest of all, superlatively—"neither is there any God beside You."

I have heard of a preacher upon whom a good man's criticism was that he made God great whenever he preached. God forbid we should ever preach otherwise! And may you, dear Hearers, always feel how great God is! I pray you go away with this on your minds—He is too great for me to dare offend Him! He is too greatly good for me to grieve Him! He is too greatly good for me to doubt Him! He is so great that nothing can be great that I can do for Him! He is so great that nothing is too great for me to give to Him! He is so great that when I give *myself* away, it is a poor offering compared with His blessings! He is so great that when all earth and Heaven ring with His praises, they still fall short of His Glory!

He is so goodly great and greatly good that I would be all His, and yield myself entirely up to His will, to be like an atom in a current, borne along by His unresisted will. I would be what He would have me be, do what He would have me do, give what He would have me give, suffer what He would have me suffer! I would be absorbed into Him! I would find a Heaven in a blessed union with Himself which should prevent forever any self-assertion, or the setting up of so much as a *wish* or a thought which would be contrary to His mind! God is great, therefore would I wish others to know Him and love Him, too. All hearts are cold in every place—would God they were melted in this fire! Would God they flowed down at His touch in constant worship!

Therefore, since He is so great, I will speak great things of Him! I will tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigns! I would ask for talent, if I may be trusted with it, with which to proclaim Him. And if I have small ability, yet with such as I have, Grace being given me, I would, to the utmost of my ability, proclaim the greatness which has already overpowered my spirit! Let Him be crowned with majesty! Let Him be King of kings and Lord of lords, because of all that He has done! Go forth, you daughters of Jerusalem, and crown your King! Throughout the whole of your lives weave chaplets for the Redeemer's brow! Let your lives be Psalms, let your garments be vestments, let every meal be a sacrament, let your whole being be transformed into an immortal Hallelujah unto the Lord Most High, for He is greatly to be extolled!!

O come, let us worship and bow down! Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, and ascribe unto the Lord the Glory due unto His name! Blessed God, blessed God, what more can Your servant say? He has not the voice of David, nor David's harp, nor David's poetic fire, nor David's inspiration—and where even David failed, what more can he say? Lord, You know all things, you know that I love you, and thousands of your servants here can join in the same declaration! Accept what we speak and what we feel, but cannot utter! Bless Your saints forever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Samuel 7.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—230, 231, 775.**

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GOD'S HEART THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSING NO. 2641

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1899.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 18, 1882.***

***“According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things.”
2 Samuel 7:21.***

A FRIEND observed to me, just before the service, that after the earnest endeavor this morning to magnify the Grace of God, he did not want to hear any more for a week. He was perfectly satisfied with what he had heard and was only afraid lest the sermon of the evening should drive that of the morning out of his head. Well, dear Friends, that is my own fear, too! I never like driving one nail out by hammering another in and, really, what more can I say than I said this morning? I then poured out my inmost heart in endeavoring to extol the exceeding riches of God's Grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. [See Sermon #1665, Volume 28—*The Exceeding Riches of Grace*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] This evening's discourse, therefore, is intended to be like a little supplement to the big book of the morning sermon—just a few additional words upon the theme that we considered then.

As we read the chapter from which my text is taken, we noticed that David had a holy purpose in his grateful heart. He said to Nathan the Prophet, “I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains.” And he seemed to think that it was neglectful on his part to have suffered the Ark to remain so long unhoused, so he resolved to build for it, and for the worship associated with it, a Temple that would be “exceedingly magnificent.” He had for years gathered together gold and silver and he meant to continue to do so, that he might erect a shrine for the Lord, his God, more glorious than any that had ever been built by the greatest heathen prince for his false deity! This was the thought which was in David's mind and he mused upon it, for it was very sweet to him. It was, in fact, the great ambition of his life that he might be permitted to build this house for the worship of Jehovah. Yet the Lord was not willing to accept the Temple at his hands, for David had been a man of war from his youth up—and God would not have His sanctuary built with blood-stained hands. However necessary those wars might have been for the liberation and defense of the chosen nation—and they certainly were so—yet, nevertheless, a man of peace must build the house for the God of Peace. And Solomon, the son of David, in whose

reign there was no war, must have the honor of raising the great House of Prayer in the name of the Lord.

Yet, dear Brothers and Sisters, observe that though the Lord refused to David the realization of his wish, he did it in a most gracious manner. He did not put the idea away from him in anger or disdain, as though David had cherished an unworthy desire. He honored His servant even in the non-acceptance of his offer and multiplied as many blessings upon the head of the king as could have descended upon it if he had been permitted to carry out his intention!

Now, in imitation of David, let us think of some grand thing that we can do for the Lord our God. Let us, with consecrated spirit and with liberal hand, seek to honor and glorify the Lord our Redeemer! But if we should not be permitted to do that particular work upon which we have set our heart, let us not be surprised or disappointed. A servant's true obedience can sometimes be as well seen in what he does *not* do, as in what he does. It is not for us to choose our place, or our work and, though the zealous servant may prefer to do something which shall show his loyalty to his master in the clearest light, yet is that loyalty even more fully seen when his master says, "No, I wish you not to do that." And he, without a murmur, sits down, or goes to work somewhere else where he may have been bid to go. It is right for you to have in your heart a project for God's Glory—it is well that it is in your heart—but if your pet project may not be carried out, it is your duty and privilege to then say to your Lord, "I am Your servant in the doing or in the not doing. I am absolutely at Your disposal in this matter and, by Your Grace, in all other things, too—and so I wish it always to be."

Nathan was sent to David to reveal to him God's great purposes of Grace towards him and his son Solomon, and the whole of his dynasty, and to give the promise that one descended from him should sit upon the throne forever—as He does and will—for the King of kings and Lord of lords, whom we greet with cries of, "Hosanna!" is the Son of David. And He still reigns and He shall reign till all His foes shall be trodden beneath His feet. And then He shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah! As this Revelation was given to David, he seems to have been oppressed with the weight of mercy which God had put upon him, so he went in and sat before the Lord to meditate upon what Nathan had said. I think there were two questions that arose in his mind—and to these questions he tried to find an answer. The first was—Why should God speak such "exceedingly great and precious promises" concerning such weighty matters, such everlasting blessings? That was his first question. And the other was—Why should these great promises be spoken to *him*? Why to him rather than to anyone else? "Who am I, O Lord God! And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" He then proceeded to give an answer to his two questions in the words of our text, "According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things."

So, from his answer we learn, first, that *the measure of God's goodness is the heart of God* and, secondly, *the reason of this goodness lies in the heart of God.*

I. First, THE MEASURE OF DIVINE GOODNESS IS THE HEART OF GOD.

God did great things for David, but not because of David's own greatness. "I took you," said the Lord to him, "from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel." He was at first nothing but a shepherd boy, so God did not choose him because of his greatness. And when the Lord gave these great promises to David, it was not because of the greatness of David's design of building the Temple, for God seemed to think but little of that and said, "In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spoke I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed My people Israel, saying, Why have you not built Me an house of cedar?" No, the one reason for the great blessings and promises which God gave to David was found in the *heart of God*! If a king gives presents to his courtiers, why does he make them so precious and costly! Not because of the extraordinary deserts of the person upon whom he bestows them, but because he is, himself, a king and, therefore, his gifts must correspond with his high position. A man of liberal spirit gives generously, where a churl would scarcely spare the smallest bronze coin. But why does the generous one give so freely! Why, simply because he is generous! Men do not always measure their gifts by the worth of those to whom they give them, but if they are, themselves, large-hearted, they reckon according to the largeness of their own hearts and give accordingly. That is what David said—he could not imagine why God should do such great things for him till this thought entered his mind, "He is a great God. Greatly gracious and full of loving kindness and therefore it is that He has promised all these things to me."

If you look carefully, you will see that this general principle runs through all the gifts of God to us. But, dear Hearers, God gave us one such costly gift that He could never give us another equal to it! I mean, *the great gift of the Lord Jesus Christ*. God had but one only-begotten and well-beloved Son, yet He gave Him to us! Now, if all Heaven and earth were put together, and all that God has anywhere in the universe were added thereto, it could not equal in value that first majestic and unspeakable Gift! How came the great Jehovah ever to think of making such a wondrous Present as this to poor worms such as men are? No one could have suggested the thought to Him! I can well believe that when the holy angels heard that the Son of God was to be Incarnate, and when it oozed out that in human flesh He was to die, even they could scarcely believe that such a thing was possible! The thought of Calvary's Sacrifice could never by *any* possibility have originated in their mind! O God, You did give Your Son to us, and for us, because Your heart was Your heart and there is nothing like it even in Your Heaven of Glory! His infinite heart, in inconceivable compassion, suggested to itself the giving up of its greatest Treasure and it gave up for us, poor sinful men, the very heart of Christ to bleed and die on our behalf! It must be because of the love of the heart of God that this unique Gift was given—there could be no other reason for its bestowal.

Then, dear Friends, following the course of the chapter as well as we can, the next promise was concerning the *great adoption*. God said to David, concerning Solomon, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son"—and the great honor which was promised to Solomon has been also conferred upon every Believer in Jesus, for, "as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right, or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Have not many of us received within our hearts "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"? Now, what could have induced God to adopt *us* as His sons and daughters? What could have made Him say to *us*, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you," except this reason which David gives in the words of our text, "According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things"? The fatherly heart of God longed to take within itself vast multitudes of the human race, so He said, "My Son shall be the first-born among many brethren. He is my only-begotten Son, but there shall be given to Him a numerous seed who shall be joint-heirs with Him, for they shall be adopted into My family." And it is even so. God did not adopt us because of any merit in us which entitled us to be His children—but because He has such a great heart, so full of love—when He made a feast for His Son, He could not endure that there should be any empty seats at that royal banquet, so He said to His servants, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled!" Thus you and I, Beloved, were brought in and *made* to sit there with Christ Jesus, as we do sit even now, for He is not ashamed to call us brethren. This greatness of the heart of God must have been the cause and the *only* cause of our adoption, as well as of our redemption!

The Lord also promised to David that when He had adopted Solomon as His son, He would be constant to him, and never forsake him—"If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul." Brothers and Sisters, that *great constancy of love* finds a parallel in your case and mine! God does not adopt us as His children, today, and then cast us off tomorrow. I speak with all reverence when I say that it is not possible for Him who, "according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," to unchild us and permit us to lose that hope! My sons, whatever they may be, must always be my sons. And they who are born of God shall forever be the children of God. I venture to repeat the lines that have often been spoken against, but which are true every whit—

***"Once in Him, in Him forever!
Nothing from His love can sever!"***

He gives us eternal life and we shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of His hands.

And why is this? Because of some good thing in us that will make us constant and keep us holding fast to Him? No! Here is the answer, let me read the text again—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." God's heart is constant in its affection. He does not cast away His children. He will not divorce the soul that has been es-

poused unto Him. Christ has made us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—we can *never* be cut off from Him—no, not even a little finger of Christ shall ever be taken away, else would He be a mutilated Savior and that He can never be! His own declaration is, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” He will securely and forever keep all the sheep that were given to Him by His Father! Not one of them will be lost.

This has always seemed to me to be one of the supreme blessings of the Covenant of Grace. I confess that I would hardly give a penny for any salvation that I could lose. I would not go across the street to pick up a sort of quarterly or yearly salvation! Everlasting life is the thing we need—the life of God which can never change or be taken from us—and that is what is given to all of you who believe in Christ Jesus! But why is it given? The only answer is—According to the heart—the faithful, immutable, gracious, loving heart—of the ever-blessed Father. Even under the old dispensation, God said, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” “The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.” He cannot endure it and, therefore, He will not put away those who are espoused to Him!

Let me mention another great favor which we get from God, and that is, *the promise of blessing for the future*. The Lord spoke concerning Solomon and David's house, “for a great while to come,” and He has spoken after the same fashion concerning us who believe in Jesus. Paul asked, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” And then answered his own question, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Unless Christ shall come first, we shall all die—but death will not divide us from the living Savior! It will only knock off the fetters from this decaying body and give us liberty to soar away to the bosom of our Lord! You and I, if we are believers in Him, shall be there with Him. If we are among the called, and chosen, and faithful, we shall, by-and-by, stand at His right hand and we shall reign with Him, in His Glory, forever and ever, in yonder land of blessedness—in the Kingdom of the Father! “You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come,” said David. But, in our case, it is far more than a great time to come, for it is a great *eternity* to come! God has appointed bliss for us forever and forever—“pleasures forevermore.” “A crown of glory that fades not away.” “A city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.” “A kingdom which cannot be moved.”

That last passage suggests one thing more which I find in this chapter. That is, *the promise of the kingdom*. The Lord said, concerning David's son, “I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” And here is the parallel in our case, for we are made kings and priests unto our God and we shall reign forever and ever! To us, also, belong our Lord's words to His disciples, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me.” “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom.” You shall even judge angels and sit as co-assessors with the great Judge in that Last Tremendous Day! And concerning the mighty fallen angel, himself, to you shall be fulfilled the promise, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Oh, the glory of which He has spoken concerning us and the kingdom that is yet to be revealed!

Now, why does the Lord lavish such marvelous mercy upon such insignificant and undeserving creatures as we are? Why does He seem to use His utmost powers in inventing new blessings for us, such as must astonish the angels that stand before His face? Oh, why does He thus lift the beggars from the dunghill and set them among princes, even the princes of His people! Our text contains the only answer—“According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things.” What an immeasurable measure of goodness and Grace there is in the heart of God!

Before I leave this part of my subject, I want you to turn it to practical account. Try, dear Friends, to use this thought whenever you are exercising faith. The devil will say to you about many a promise which God has given, “Oh, that is too good to be true!” Tell him that it is not so—it might *seem* too good if God gave only according to the measure of *our* merit, or the limit of *our* understanding, or the extent of *our* faith. But He does much better than that—“exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” *God's* heart, not mine, is the measure of His giving! Not my capacity to receive, but His capacity to give! Get that thought thoroughly fixed in your mind. I can only receive like a man, but God can give like a God! He does everything Divinely and He certainly makes no exception to His rule when He is dealing with His people. If it is God who is to give, then I can believe in the greatness of the gift, be it what it may, for nothing can be too great for Him!

You know the old and somewhat hackneyed story about Alexander promising to a man in his army that he would give him whatever he chose to ask. He was to send his request to the imperial treasurer, but, when it was written out, it was for so huge a sum that the treasurer refused to pay it. It was too much, he said, for a common soldier to receive. But when Alexander heard of it, he said, “I like that man's faith—he has honored me by such a large demand, for he asks something that it is worthy of Alexander to give.” Now, if that man had been foolish enough to measure his request by his own poor rank, he would have asked for a few pounds in ready cash, or a pension of a few pence a day might have contented him. But, instead of doing so, he reckoned according to the vastness of Alexander's empire and asked great things, and so he did Alexander honor! Whenever you are exercising faith, Beloved, remember that it is according to the heart of God to give with exceeding generosity.

So, when you are praying, if unbelief would stop you, and say, “Do not ask for this or that, for it is too much for you to have,” I advise you to say to yourself, “I will not be stinted in my desire and I will not commit the sin of limiting the Holy One of Israel. But, as He gives according to His own heart, I will ask great things of Him, for He has said, ‘Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.’” You know, I suppose what some people say is the meaning of that passage. I am not quite sure that it is so, but it is

said that, sometimes, the kings of Persia have been known to bid a prince open his mouth and they have put in diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and all manner of precious things, as many as it would hold. If that kind of thing should happen to any of you, I expect that you would open your mouths very wide—I have no doubt that your capacity to receive would be greater, on that occasion, than you have ever yet known it to be! But when you are coming before the God of the whole earth, oh, for a big mouth to ask great things of Him! Oh, for a wide mouth, then, to take in every conceivable blessing from Him! In our prayers, let us not ask according to the measure of our poor little heart that is so shriveled, cold and weak, but according to God's great heart that is infinite and full of Grace and love!

Just once more, use this thought of the greatness of God's heart in the exercise of your delight in the Lord. Sometimes we are afraid of being too happy, but that is scarcely possible. Oh, how happy Christians have a right to be, with Heaven for their home, God for their Father, Christ for their Savior, the Holy Spirit for their Comforter and the Sacred Trinity pledged to defend and bless them! Oh, sit down and delight yourselves in the Lord! Let me not hear anything about cares and troubles for a while—I need to get into my secret place of communion with my God, shut the door and just turn over and over in my mind such a passage as this, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God." Or this, "Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." David wrote, "Delight yourself also in the Lord," not merely be thankful, or peaceful, or happy, but, "*delight yourself in the Lord.*" Do not go paddling about in the shallows—take a header and dive into the depths of Divine joy! Plunge yourself into the Godhead's deepest sea and be lost in His immensity! You shall never so fully and so truly find yourself as when you have lost yourself in God! "Oh, that is saying too much!" says someone. No, it is not—it may be too much for you if you are measuring with your poor little bushel—but now take God's great measure as it is revealed to us in our text—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them." The next time I find a little mercy, I will say, "Thank God for that," but I shall not be quite sure whether it is not one of the common, ordinary mercies that He gives, alike, to His friends and His foes. But when I get hold of a great mercy that is so enormous that I cannot comprehend it, I shall say of it, "That came from God! I am sure it did. Great mercies come from the great God, the great Giver of all good things." The greatness of the mercy is the proof that it is Divine—and my soul will appropriate it, and rejoice in it, for God has given it to me according to His own heart!

I have only a few minutes left for the second part of my subject, which happens to be a Truth of God which I have so often preached to you, that I may the less regret that I have but a short time to speak upon it now.

II. Secondly, THE REASON OF GOD'S GOODNESS TO US LIES IN HIS OWN HEART.

Why does God bless His people? What is the cause of it? Here it is in the text—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." Why did God have mercy at all on any sinner? Because mercy was in His heart and "He delights in mercy." When God was willing to pardon sin, why did He not save the fallen angels? Why did He pass by them and look in pity on men? For no reason that I know of, but that it was according to His own heart. And when He did turn to men to save them, why did He take pity on *you*, and why did He look with love on *me*? I cannot tell you, except for the reason which our Lord Jesus, Himself, gave, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." When God elected His people, why did He elect *them*? Here is the reply—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." Sovereignty ruled the hour! God chose whom He had a right to choose, for this is one of the attributes which He strictly guards—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Some people bite their tongues whenever they hear me quote that text. Well, they will have to bite them very often, for it is one of the most grand Truths of God revealed in the Scriptures and I shall delight to repeat it as long as I live! And to any objector, I have simply to say what Paul wrote, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" It is God's will that chooses His people unto eternal life. We know no other reason.

Will you, who are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, tell me why you were thus favored? Why were you given to Christ and put into His Church? Yes, why, but that it was according to the heart of God? And when you were called effectually by His Grace and made willing in the day of His power, while so many others refused to come, and willfully perished, what was the reason for the distinction in your case? Some good thing in you? Far from it! Our text explains the mystery—"According to Your own heart, have You done all these great things." And when you were pardoned, Brother, why were you forgiven? For the sake of your repentance, or in hope of your doing better in the future? By no means, for, if you did better, it would be the *result* of the pardon, not the *cause* of it! The only satisfactory explanation is that it was according to God's own heart! Is not that a grand passage, in the 43rd of Isaiah, (oh, how often I have admired God's Grace as revealed in it), where God speaks of His people having wearied Him with their iniquities? He says that He never wearied them, nor caused them to serve with an offering, yet they had not bought Him any sweet cane with money, nor filled Him with the fat of their sacrifices. But they made Him to serve with their sins, and wearied Him with their iniquities. Yet, even then, He goes on to say, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions"—for what reason? "For My own sake"—not, "for your sakes," but, "for My own sake"—"and will not remember your sins."

The reason for God's mercy lies not in man, but in God's own heart! He looked and He could see no good of any kind in man, nor the slightest hope of there ever being any good. But within His own bosom He found

the motive for the display of His Grace—and then His own arm brought salvation! Oh, how blessed it is to see this great Truth of God—that the cause of the salvation of any man lies in God's own heart, not in the man's own goodness or worthiness, or in any works foreseen in him—or in anything at all that comes of the creature!

Now, I want you who are coming to God for mercy to see how you can make use of this Truth. I know what you have been doing. You have been looking inside *your* heart to find a reason why God should forgive you and, as you cannot find any reason *there*, you think that there is none. Now just turn your eyes the other way and look up to the great heart of God, and say, with David, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Try to spy out the reason for mercy in God—*there is not any reason for it in yourself*. You deserve His fiercest wrath and hottest Hell! And if that is your portion, you will never be able to complain of any injustice having been done to you, for you will have no more punishment than your sins have brought upon you! But look away to God's heart and you will see that He loves to forgive—that it is His Glory to forgive! So plead with Him to pardon you for His own name's sake, for that is the best of all arguments.

I want you not only to do that, when you first come to Him, but to do the same as you continue to cling to Him. I can assure you that I am clinging to Christ, at this moment, in exactly the same way as I did when I first found Him. I got rid of everything that I could confide in. In fact, I would have had to laugh at myself if I had set up any righteousness of my own, for I had not a stick or stone out of which I could have made a righteousness fit to present to God! Then I came to Christ, not because I had any right of my own to cling to, but because He seemed a dear, kind Savior who loved me to cling to Him! And that is just why I am still clinging to Him. I say to Him, "Lord, I will not go away from You, for as I look up to You, I perceive that You are all goodness, and all mercy, and all love. And therefore, by Your Grace, I intend to cling to You as long as I live. Sink or swim, I will always hold to You." In like manner, dear Friend, your reason for continuing to cling to Christ must be found only in the heart of Christ and not in yourself. Cling on, then, because it is according to His heart never to cast away a single soul that puts its trust in Him!

And this is the reason, dear Brothers and Sisters, why we must cast all our care upon Him. I invite you, and I urge you to do so. If you ask yourself, "Why should I cast my care on Him?" The reply is, because it is His heart's wish that you should do so. Christ loves you to leave your cares with Him. The more you trust Him, the better He loves you, if that can be. At least, the more you shall *realize* His love. You know the pretty story of the poor girl in India whose teacher was very sick and weak, so the girl begged her teacher to lean upon her. But the English lady did not like to lean too heavily, so the girl pleaded, "O dear Teacher, if you love me, lean hard! I shall be happy to feel your weight upon me." And it is just so with the Lord Jesus! He loves you to lean hard upon Him, to cast yourself wholly upon Him and give up trying to help yourself! You will

never be so blessed and never realize so much of the preciousness of Christ as when you do that! Perhaps you ask, "May I?" May you?! He wants you to do so and that is the very *reason* why you may! According to His own heart, He bids you come and cast yourself entirely upon Him!

Now, dear Hearers, what do you say to this subject? Does it not glorify God? Have I preached up *man*? No, I have preached him *down* and I have tried to preach God up to the very highest—and so I will while this tongue can move! Let my right hand forget her cunning before I shall begin to preach about the dignity of human nature and the grandeur of the miserable wretch called man! No, God is glorious over all and if man is plucked from the burning, it must be the hand of God that delivers him—and the reason why he is rescued is because the heart of God has moved His hand to save the poor sinner from going down to destruction! I am quite content with the poet's reason—

***"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you always must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Your sight."***

But, O Beloved, what a wide door this Truth of God sets open for poor lost men! You self-righteous people will not come in by it, for you do not like this God-made entrance. You want to try to save yourselves—but you will only the more effectually *ruin* yourselves—that is all that will come of it! But every poor sinner who is worried by the devil and brought to the lowest extremity, will say, "If there is a reason in the heart of God why I should be saved, I will come and trust myself on Christ's finished work and, trusting in Him, I will see whether I shall not be saved." O you lost and ruined! O you helpless and hopeless! O you far-off ones! O you who lie at death's door and Hell's door—look to Jesus on the Cross! Your hope lies there! Turn your eyes away from yourself, for there is nothing in yourself but that which you will have to weep over and groan over! Man's extremity is God's opportunity—if you have come to the end of self, I invite you to begin with Christ! Yes, if you have done with self, Christ has already begun with you! And when He begins, He never ceases till He perfects His work! The Lord bless and save you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-22.

Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; that the king said unto Nathan the Prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains.* He said no more, but his intention was very plain, namely, to build a house that should be a more suitable abode for the Ark of the Lord.

3. *And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart; for the LORD is with you.* He spoke too fast. Even Prophets, who are Inspired of God, must wait upon their Master for their message! And when they utter words which only come out of their own mouths, they say what they will have to unsay before long. It did look very clear that this was the

proper thing for Nathan to say to David, but he had not a, "Thus says the Lord," for it.

4, 5. *And it came to pass that night, that the Word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell My servant David, Thus says the LORD. "You have already let him know what Nathan had to say about the matter. Now go and tell him what Jehovah says."*

5. *Shall you build Me an house for Me to dwell in?* The conception was altogether too low. He has made all space—time is His creation and the arch of Heaven stands by His almighty power—shall God, Himself, have a house in which He can dwell?

6. *Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.* A structure to be set up, and taken down, and to be moved about wherever the people journeyed. That was sufficient to be a central shrine of worship, and God cared for nothing else.

7. *In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spoke I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed My people Israel, saying, Why build you not Me an house of cedar? Did God ever put to the children of Israel such a question as this? No, and it is very remarkable that, from the time that the Temple was built, you may date the decay of true religion in Israel! And the same thing has happened many times since—whenever religion is surrounded by elaborate ceremonies and gorgeous architecture, it is almost certain to suffer loss of power and efficacy. The simplicity of worship may not be the life of it, but it has a very intimate connection with that life.*

8-11. *Now therefore so shall you say unto My servant David, Thus says the LORD of Hosts, I took you from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: and I was with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies, out of your sight, and have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you an house. God has a way of returning men's generosity in kind. Since David wished to build God's house, God would build David's house!*

12-15. *And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you. Here is our warrant for believing in the final salvation of Solomon! Perhaps that Book of Ecclesiastes, the work of his old age, shows us by what rough and thorny ways God brought the wanderer back. He had tried to satisfy himself with the things of time and sense,*

but he was constrained, at last, to utter this verdict, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; all is vanity." And He had to go back to His God, and find his comfort there.

16-18. *And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you: your throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. Then went king David in and sat before the LORD.* Like one weighted down with a great load of mercy, too heavy for him to stand up under it and, therefore, he must sit down and consider and meditate upon the wonderful words of God to him!

18, 19. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me to this point? And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O LORD GOD?* "All that You have done for me, therefore, in overcoming my enemies, and making me king over this people, has seemed to be but a small thing to You, for, 'You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come.'" That astonished David and, therefore, he asked, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" "Man gives after his own grudging fashion, but You give in a lordly, kingly, Divine way." David's question may be rendered, "Is this the law of the Man? Am I to be the parent of that Man who shall be my Lord as well as my son, who shall reign forever and ever, and of whose Kingdom there shall be no end?" David was spelling out the inner mystery hidden in the words of the Lord, reading between the lines and discovering that the Covenant which God had made with him was, at least in some respects, a repetition of that greater Covenant made with Christ on his behalf.

20. *And what can David say more unto You?* He had not said much, but he could not say much under such circumstances. He was utterly overwhelmed, just as when some wondrous kindness has been shown to us, we wish rather to sit still, in grateful silence, than to stand up and speak acknowledgments, for our heart is too full for utterance!

20-22. *For You, LORD GOD, know Your servant. For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.* God had said to David, in the message He sent by Nathan, "I have made you a great name, like unto the name of the great that are in the earth." And now David brings back the words to God, and says, "You are great, O LORD GOD: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" —8, 36 (SONG I), 136 (SONG II).

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

THE PLEA OF FAITH

NO. 88

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 22, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“Do as You have said.”
2 Samuel 7:25.***

NATHAN had been giving to David, on God’s behalf, sundry exceedingly great and precious promises. David expresses his gratitude to God for having so promised and he says, “Now, O Lord God, the Word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said.”

It is a prayer to God. Those words naturally flowed from his lips—after hearing such precious promises, he was anxious for their fulfillment. Such words will be equally in place if they shall be adopted by us in these modern times and if, after reading a promise, on turning to God’s Word, we should finish by saying, “Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope,” it will be a practical application of the text, “Do as You have said.”

I shall not commence my sermon, tonight, by endeavoring to prove that this Bible is what God has said. I do not come here to give you arguments to prove the Inspiration of Scripture. I assume that I speak to a Christian congregation and I assume, therefore, from the start, that this is God’s Word and none other! Leaving that matter, then, altogether, permit me to proceed at once to the text, understanding by what God has said, the Scriptures are His Truth. And I trust there are some here who will be led, tonight, to cry to God in behalf of some promise made to their souls, “O Lord, do as You have said.”

I. Our first remark shall be HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KNOW WHAT GOD HAS SAID, for unless we know what God has said, it will be folly to say, “Do as You have said.” Perhaps there is no book more neglected in these days than the Bible. I do verily believe there are more moldy Bibles in this world than there are of any sort of neglected books. We have still-born books in abundance. We have innumerable books which never see any circulation except the circulation of the butter shop. And we have no book that is so much bought and then so speedily laid aside and so little used as the Bible! If we buy a newspaper, it is generally handed from one person to another, or we take care to peruse it pretty well. Indeed, some

go so far as to read advertisements and all! If a person purchases a novel, it is well known how he will sit and read it all the way through, till the midnight candle is burnt out. The book must be finished in one day because it is so admirable and interesting—but the Bible, of course, in the estimation of many, is not an interesting book! And the subjects it treats of are not of any very great importance. So most men think. They think it is a very good book to carry out on a Sunday, but never meant to be used as a book of pleasure, or a book to which one could turn with delight. Such is the opinion of many. But no opinion can be more apart from the truth. For what book can treat of truths one-half as important as those that concern the soul? What book can so well deserve my attention as that which is written by the greatest of all Authors, God, Himself? If I must read a valuable book with attention, how much more ought I to give my mind to the study of that Book which is invaluable and which contains God's Truth without the slightest admixture of error! And if books upon my health, or books which only concern the doings of my fellow creatures occupy some of my time, and deservedly so, how much more time should I spend in reading that which concerns my everlasting destiny, which reveals to me worlds, up to now, unknown—which tells me how I may escape from Hell and fly to Heaven?

And I must remark that even among Christian people, the Bible is one of the least read books that they have in their house. What with our innumerable magazines, our religious newspapers and our perpetual controversies about the Bible, it is too seldom that people read the Bible! There certainly is not that reading of it that there used to be. Our predecessors, the ancient Puritans, would scarcely read any book but the Bible! And if a book were not concerning the Bible, they did not care about reading it at all. Perhaps therein they may have been too strait and narrow and may somewhat have cramped their minds, but I would rather have my mind cramped with Divinity, than I would have it enlarged with lies! I would rather have a little Truth of God and have a mind filled with that, though that mind should only be as large as a nutshell, than have the most gigantic intellect and have that crammed with error! It is not the greatness of our intellect, it is the *rightness* of it, that makes us men in this world and right men before God. I beseech you, therefore, you who are members of Christian Churches, if you have but little time, do not expend it in reading ephemeral books, but take your Bible and read it constantly. And I promise you one thing, that if you are already Christians, the more you read the Bible, the more you will love it! You may find it hard, perhaps, at present, to read a short passage and meditate upon it all day, but as you proceed, you will see such unfathomable

depths, such heights beyond your reach and you will discover such unutterable sweetness in this precious honeycomb dropping with drops of honey, that you will say, "I must have more of it!" And your spirit will always cry, "Give, give." Nor will it be content until you can have God's statutes upon your mind, daily, to be your songs in the house of your pilgrimage!

The errors of this present age have sprung from a non-reading of the Bible. Do you think, my Brothers and Sisters, that if we all read the Scriptures with judgment and desired to know them rightly, there would be so many sects as there are? Heresies and schisms have sprung from this—one man has gone a little astray upon a point—another man, without referring to Scripture, has endorsed all he has said. Another one has added something else to it. And then another one, being cunning and full of subtlety of the devil, has twisted passages of Scripture and woven them into a system—a system which has been fashioned, in the first place, by mistake—and has accumulated and become more colossal by sundry other mistakes which naturally accrued to it and, at last, has been perfected by the craft of designing heretics!

And, again—*bigotry, ill feeling and uncharitableness must all be traced, in a large degree, to our lack of reading the Bible.* What is the reason why yon man hates me because I preach what I believe to be right? If I speak the Truth of God, am I responsible for his hating me? Not in the least degree! I am sometimes told by my people that I attack certain parties very hard. Well, I cannot help it. If they are not right, it is not my fault—if they come in my way, then I am compelled to run over them! Suppose two of you should be driving in the road tomorrow and one of you should be on the right side of the road and some accident should occur. You would say, "Sir, the other man ought to have pulled up, he must pay the damages, for he had no business there at all on his wrong side." And it will be the same with us if we preach God's Truth! We must go straight on. If the greatest ill-feeling in the world rises up, we have nothing to do with it. God's Truth will sometimes bring about warfare—Jesus Christ, you know—said, Himself, that He came to put warfare between man and man—to set the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law. And He said that a man's foes would be those of his own household! But if there is ill-feeling, if there is clamoring of sects, to whom is it due? Who is responsible for it? Why, the man who makes the new sects, not the man who abides fast and firm by the old one! If I am safely moored by a good strong anchor of fundamental Truths of God and some other shall strike my vessel and sink himself, I will not pay the damages. I stand firm—if others choose to

go away from the Truth, to cut their cables and slip their moorings—then let them! God grant that we may not do the same. Hold the Truth, my Friends, and hold it as the easiest method of sweeping away heresies and false doctrines! But nowadays, you know, you are told, “Oh, it does not matter what you believe! Doctrines are nothing.” And they have tried, lately, to make a very happy family of us, like the happy family near Waterloo Bridge, where all kinds of creatures are shut up together! But they are only kept in order by a mesh which the man, when we turn our heads, applies between the bars of the cage! Just so with denominations. They want to amalgamate us all. We differ in various Doctrines and, therefore, some of us must be wrong if we hold Doctrines which are directly hostile to each other. But we are told, “It does not matter—doubtless, you are all right.” Now, I cannot see that! If I say one thing and another man says another, how, by all that is holy, can both speak the Truth of God? Shall black and white be the same color? Shall lies and Truth be the same? When they shall be—and fire shall sleep in the same cradle with the waves of the ocean—then shall we agree to amalgamate ourselves with those who deny our Doctrines, or speak evil of what we believe to be the Gospel!

My Brethren, no man has any right to absolve your judgment from allegiance to God. There is liberty of conscience between man and man, but there is none between *God* and man! No man has a right to believe what he likes. He is to believe what *God* tells him! And if he does not believe that, though he is not responsible to man, or to any set of men, or to any government, yet mark you, he is responsible to God! I beseech you, therefore, if you would avoid heresies and bring the Church to a glorious union, read the Scriptures! Read not so much man’s comments, or man’s books, but read the *Scriptures* and keep your faith on this—“God has said it.” If you cannot make all God’s Truths agree, yet remember God has not made two sets of Truth opposite to each other. That were an impossibility which even God, Himself, could not accomplish, mighty though He is! My Brothers and Sisters, always stand by what God has said and do not be turned aside from it by all the arguments that can be brought to bear against you! “Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Christ.”

II. Now for our second point. ALL THAT FAITH NEEDS TO BUILD UPON IS WHAT GOD HAS SAID. “Do as You have said.” The only solid foothold that faith has is, “*It is written*, God has said it.” When a sinner comes to God, he must have nothing else to rely upon except this, “Do as You have said.” There is a tendency in most men’s minds to bring before God something which He did not say. Many of you, I dare say, will go and

ask God in prayer for something for which you cannot prove a positive promise that He will ever give it to you. You go to God and say, "Lord, do as John Bunyan said, do as Whitefield said—let me have an experience like theirs." Now, that is all wrong. We must, when we come to God, say only, "Lord, do as You have said." And then, again, I do believe that many of those who are members of our Churches have not put their faith simply in what God has said. If I were to go round to some of you and ask you why you believe yourselves to be Christians, it is marvelous what strange reasons many of you would bring. It is very singular what strange views persons often have as to the way of salvation. It is hard to bring a sinner to God simply with this—"Lord, do as You have said."

I know some who think themselves to be God's children because they dreamed they were! They had a very remarkable dream, one night, and if you were to laugh at them, they would be unutterably indignant. They would cut you at once out of the family of God and call you an "accuser of the Brethren." They do not rely upon what God has said in the Bible—they had some singular vision, when deep sleep had fallen upon them, and because of that vision, they reckon they are children of God! In the course of my seeing persons who come to me, I hear, every now and then, a story like this, "Sir, I was in such-and-such a room and suddenly I thought I saw Jesus Christ and heard a voice saying such-and-such a thing to me and that is the reason why I hope I am saved." Now, that is not God's way of salvation! The sinner is not to say, "Lord, do as I dreamed, do as I fancy." He is to say, "Do as *You have said*." And if I have anyone here who has never had a dream, or vision, he does not need to have one—if he goes to God with this, "Lord, You have said Christ died to save sinners. I am a sinner. Save me!" That is faith. "Do as You have said." There are other persons far more rational, who if they were asked the reason for their supposing that they are saved, would speak of some remarkable feeling which, on a particular occasion, they had when hearing a certain minister. Or of a particular text which struck them suddenly and transported them to the seventh Heaven and they had such thoughts as they never had before! "Oh, Sir," they say "it is marvelous! I thought my heart would break, it was so full of joy and gladness! I never felt so before, in all my life. And when I went out of the Chapel, I felt so light and so ready to run home, I thought I would sing all the way! So I know I must be a child of God." Well, you may know it, but I don't, because there are many persons who have been deluded by the devil in that fashion who never had faith in Christ! Faith in Christ never rests in feelings. It rests on a "You have said it." Ask Faith whether it will ever take its stand on anything but a, "You have said," and Faith will answer,

“No. I cannot climb to Heaven on a ladder made of dreams—they are too flimsy to bear my feet.” Faith, why do you not march on? Why do you not cross that bridge? “No,” says Faith, “I cannot. It is made up of feelings and feelings are intoxicating things—and I cannot place my feet upon them.” Faith will stand on a promise, though it is no bigger than a grain of mustard seed! But it could not stand on a feeling if it were as large as the everlasting mountains! Faith can build on a “You have said it.” But it cannot build on feelings, on dreams and experiences—it only relies on this—“You have said it.” Let me caution my Hearers against suppositions which some of them have as to salvation. Some persons think that the Holy Spirit is a kind of electric shock working in the heart. That there is some mysterious and terrible thing they cannot understand, which they must *feel*, not only very differently from what they ever felt before, but even superior to anything described in God’s Word! Now I beg to tell you that so far from the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit being a dark thing in its manifestation, it is, because it is the Holy Spirit, a thing of simplicity and light! The way of salvation is no great mystery—it is very plain—it is, “believe and live.” And Faith needs no mysteries to hang itself upon. It catches hold of the bare naked promise and it says, “Lord, do as You have said.”

My faith can, on this promise, live. I know that on this promise it can never die. Faith needs neither testimonies of man, nor learning of philosophers, nor eloquence of orators, nor feelings, nor visions, nor dreams! It needs nothing else applied to the heart but what God has said! And it goes to God and says, “Lord, do as You have said.”

III. Now for the third remark. We see that Faith is a very bold thing—when God promises something, faith goes to God and says, “Lord, do as You have said.”

My third remark is that FAITH IS QUITE RIGHT IN SO DOING. The Lord always meant, when He said a thing, that we should remind Him of it. God’s promises were never meant to be waste paper. He means that they should be used! Whenever God gives a promise, if a man does not use that promise, the promise fails in effect to that man and God’s great intention therein is in some measure frustrated. God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money and I take it and use it. And oh, my Friend, do try and use God’s promises—nothing pleases God better than to see His promises put in circulation! He loves to see His children bring them up to Him and say, “Lord, do as You have said.” And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use His promises. Do you think that God will be any the poorer for giving you the riches He has promised? Do you think He will

be any the less holy for giving holiness to you? Do you think He will be any the less pure for washing you from your sins? And He has said, "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red, they shall be whiter than snow." Faith gets hold of that promise and it does not just say, "This is a precious promise, I will look at it." No, it goes right up to the Throne of God and says, "Lord, here is the promise, do as You have said." And God says, "Oh, Faith, I am as glad to see the promise brought to Me, as you are to bring it. I meant My promise to be used and the using of it glorifies Me." Why, if anyone gave us a check and we did not go to have it cashed—though we might need the money badly enough—but suppose we said, "I don't like to go"—there would be some slur cast upon the character of the man whose signature had made it valid! And so when a Christian gets a promise, if he does not take it to God, he dishonors Him. But when Faith, in all its raggedness, poverty and sickness about it, goes to God and says, "Lord, I have nothing to recommend me but this—'You have said it'—here is the promise, Lord, give me the fulfillment." God smiles and says, "Yes, My child, I love to see you trust Me. Here, take back the fulfillment and go on your way rejoicing." Never think that God will be troubled by your asking Him about His promises! God likes to be troubled, if I may use such an expression. He likes you to go to His door and say, "Great Banker, cash this note. Great Promiser, fulfill this promise. Great Covenant God, fulfill Your Covenant and send me not away empty." "Do as You have said," is a legitimate request. We ought to say it. It honors God and God meant that we should so use His promises! "Do as You have said."

Another remark—*Faith has very good reason for appealing to God to do as He has said.* If you should say to Faith, "Faith, why do you expect God to do as He has said? Do you know you are undeserving of such-and-such a mercy? Though He has said it, why do you expect it?" Faith would answer, "I have a whole bundle of reasons that justify the act. And in the first place, I have a right to expect Him to do as He has said, because He is a *true* God—I know He cannot lie. He has said He will give me such-and-such a thing. If He were not a truthful God, I would not say, 'do as You have said.' But since He is a true God and never was known to break His promise, and since, moreover, by two Immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie—His oath and His promise—He has made the thing secure. And since I know that in Christ all the promises are yes, and amen, I think I have good reason enough for going to Him and saying, 'do as You have said.' If He were some fallible being who promised and would not perform, I might hesitate somewhat. But since He is al-

ways true and constantly precious, I will go and say to Him, ‘Lord, do as You have said.’” Poor Sinner! God has said, “He that confesses his sin shall find mercy.” Now, if you go to God, you need no other plea than this—“Lord, do as You have said. I have confessed my sins—do as You have said.” “But, Sinner, why should I do as I have said? You do not deserve it.” “Lord, You are a true God—

***You have promised to forgive,
All who on Your Son believe.
Lord I know You can not lie,
Give me Christ or else I die.”***

Go, poor Sinner, tell the Lord that! And as truly as He is God, He will never send you away empty! Faith has good reasons to feel that God is true and, therefore, He will do as He has said. And not only so, but He is *able to do it*—His ability is Infinite. His intentions, also, are the *same*—His promises never get worn out by being circulated and they become all the more sure for being tried! Poor Sinner, here again is a joyful thought—you can go to God and say, “Lord You have promised to wash away all our iniquities and cast them into the depths of the sea. Lord, if You had been a changeable God, I might have thought You would not wash away mine, but You did wash Manasseh and you did wash Paul. Now, Lord, because You are unchangeable, ‘do as You have said.’ For You are just the same, now, just as merciful, just as powerful and just as kind as ever You were. Will you break Your promise, Lord? ‘Do as You have said.’”

But faith puts it on stronger ground than this—it says, “Lord, if You do not do as You have said, You will be dishonored, you will be disgraced.” If a man does not carry out his promise, he is shunned—men care not to associate with one who breaks his promise! And what would become of God’s great name if He were to break His promise? Poor Sinner! You are coming to the Fountain—God has given the promise that He will wash every sinner that comes to the Fountain. Now, with reverence, let me say it, poor Sinner. If Christ did not wash You, it would be a dishonor to His Truth! If you were to go to Christ and He were to cast you out, surely, the devils in Hell would despise the name of Him who breaks His promise! Beloved, to suppose that God could violate His promise is to suppose Him divested of His Godhead! Take away God’s honor from Him, and He becomes less than man. Take away the honor which even man holds dear and what do you make of God? “Oh, Sir,” you say, “but I do not deserve it. I am such a poor worthless creature! He will not keep His promise to *me*.” I tell you that does not make a whit of difference in God’s promise. If He has promised, He is Divinely bound to perform His promise, in whatever state you may be. Though you have slandered God,

though you may have hated Him and despised Him, run away from Him and in every way ill-treated Him—if He has made a promise to you, here, in His Word, I will be bound for my God! He would keep a promise to the devil if He had made one. And if He has made a promise to you who are ever so vile, He will keep that promise to you. Hear the promise, then, once more—Are you a sinner?—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.” And, again—“He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” And, again—“Come unto Me, all you that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And let me say again—with the most profound reverence—if Christ did not give rest to every weary, heavy-laden sinner that came to Him, He would not be Christ. He would lose His truthfulness, He would be undeified, He would lose His veracity—and the loss of one poor believing Sinner would be the loss of God’s own Godhead. It would be the dethroning of the Immortal. It would be the pulling down of Heaven, the breaking asunder of the universe and the dissolution of Creation’s own earth and Creation, itself. Faith may well go to God and say, “Lord, do as You have said. For if You do not, it will be a dishonor to Yourself.”

And—let us conclude by asking, *what has God said?* I cannot tell you all that He has said to you, because I cannot mark out all the different characters here. But, my dear Friends, whatever may be your character, from the earliest stage of religion up to the last, there is always some special promise to you. And you have only to turn your Bible over and find it and then go to God with, “Do as You have said.” Let me just select a few characters. There is one here, exceedingly faint in the ways of the Lord. “Oh,” he says, “I am faint, though I hope I am pursuing.” Now, here is the promise—“He gives power unto the faint.” When you get such a promise, stick hard and fast to it. Do not let the devil cheat you out of it, but keep on saying, “Lord, You have said, ‘He gives power unto the faint.’ Do as You have said.” Let it ring and ring again in the ears of the Promiser and He will be a Performer! “Ah,” says another, “I am not faint. I am afraid I scarcely have life at all. I am a hungry and thirsty soul. I need Christ, but I cannot get at Him.” Hear this—“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Take that promise to God and keep to it—do not plead anything else, but go to God over and over again with this—“Lord, You have said it—do as You have said.” Are you covered all over with sin and under a deep sense of your iniquities? Go and tell Him this—“You have said, ‘I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea.’ Lord, I know I have these sins. I do not deny it. But you have said, ‘I will pardon them.’ I have no reason why

You should pardon them. I cannot promise that I shall be better—but, Lord—You have said it and that is enough—‘Do as You have said.’” Another one here is afraid lest he should not be able to hold onto the end and lest, after having been a child of God, he should be a castaway. Then, if that is your state, go and take this to God—“The mountains may depart and the hills may be removed, but the Covenant of My love shall not depart from you.” And when you are thinking that the Savior is going away, catch hold of His garment and say, “Jesus, do as You have said. You have said, ‘I will never leave you.’ ‘Do as You have said.’” Or, if you have lost His Presence, remember the promise, “I will come again to you.” Go and say, “Lord, I have lost the sweet comfort of Your Presence in my heart. But You have said, ‘I will come again to you.’” And if Satan says, “He is gone away and will never come back again,” tell Satan he has nothing to do with it! God has said it and keep to this, “Do as You have said.” If you do that, you will need no other argument and no other reason.

Let us suppose a case and having tried to illustrate the Truth by it, we will have done. There is a desperate ruffian. He has been involved in 20 burglaries. It is said he has committed several murders. The police are on his trail, they are hunting after him. He cannot be found. The principal point is to find him, for it is hoped that by his discovery and his pardon, more good might be done than even by his execution. Persons come to this desperately bad fellow and they tell him, “If you give yourself up, I dare say you will get a free pardon.” “I do not give myself up on *dare-says*,” he says. Another comes and says, “If you were to give yourself up, I would intercede for you. I know my lord so-and-so and such a man, member of parliament, would intercede for you.” “No,” he would say, “let well enough alone. I am pretty safe now. I am not going to give myself up on the mere speculation that someone will intercede for me.” But, by-and-by, there comes out a huge placard, “V. R. Free pardon to such a man if he surrenders himself.” He walks straight up to the place. Someone says to him, “Stop, my dear fellow. Perhaps they will hang you.” “No,” says, “they won’t.” Someone says, “They have been many years looking for you. You do not think that if you get into the fangs of the law, now, after all these years that the Queen will pardon you, do you?” “Yes,” he says, “I can trust her. She has never given a free pardon and then executed anyone.” He goes to the office and they say, “We are astonished to see this fellow. He might have stayed away—he had no necessity to give himself up.” “See,” says one, “there is a policeman, are you not afraid? There are the handcuffs. Are you not afraid that they will be put on your wrists and that you will be put into jail?” “No,” he says, “I will walk all

through the prison, but there is not a cell in which I may be locked up. The Queen has said she will pardon me and I do not need anything else.” “But look at your conduct. You know you deserve to be hanged.” “I know I do, but I have received a free pardon and I will surrender myself.” “But who can tell how many burglaries you will commit if you are allowed to go free.” “Never mind, she has promised to pardon me and I know well that her word will not be violated. Surely the Queen of England will not lie even against such an offender as I am.”

Now, you would not wonder at that, would you? It would be no very marvelous thing, because we can trust Her Majesty pretty fairly. But it is the hardest thing to get sinners to come to God. “No,” says one, “I have been a drunkard, God will not forgive me.” My dear Fellow, it is said, “All manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven to man.” “Oh,” says another, “I have been a swearer, I have been an infidel, I have blasphemed God and broken all His statutes.” My dear fellow creature, it is said, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Cannot you believe it? God means what He says! Can you not come to God, though you are trembling—cast yourself before His feet—and say, “Lord, if You damn me, I deserve it. If You should cast me down to Hell, I know You would be just. But then, Lord, You have said, ‘Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out’”? I tell you, God will do as He has said! If you have but faith to believe that promise, you need never fear!

Worthless, vilest of the vile, sweepings of the universe, the very offal of Creation—if you come to God, He will take you in—for His promise is not to be broken by reason of your vileness! He will receive you if you can but plead a promise of your own case and say to Him, “Do as You have said.” Now, then, I will say in conclusion—it will be easy enough for every poor sinner, for every penitent sinner, for every weak saint, to go home and turn his Bible over. And by a little diligence he will be able to find a promise that will exactly suit his case. And if he does not find such a promise, it will be because he did not look long enough, for there is one that just fits. And when he has got hold of it, let him go to God and say, “Lord, do as You have said,” and let him keep to that. And the heavens would sooner fall than one of God’s promises should be broken!

Oh, trust my Master! Oh, trust my Master! Trust your souls to Him! Trust your bodies to Him, I beseech you. Do it, for His own name’s sake! Amen and Amen.

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

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

WHERE TRUE PRAYER IS FOUND

NO. 1412

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to You.”
2 Samuel 7:27.***

DAVID had first found it in his heart to build a house for God. Sitting in his house of cedar, he resolved that the Ark of God should no longer abide under curtains, but should be more suitably housed. The Lord, however, did not design that David should build His Temple, though He accepted his pious intentions and declared that it was well that it was in his heart. From which we may learn that our intentions to serve the Lord in a certain manner may be thoroughly good and acceptable and yet we may not be permitted to carry them out. We may have the will but not the power—the aspiration but not the qualification. We may have to stand aside and see another do the task which we had chosen for ourselves—and yet we may be none the less pleasing to the Lord who, in His great love, accepts the will for the deed.

It is a holy self-denial which in such cases rejoices to see the Lord glorified by others and at the Captain's bidding cheerfully stands back in the rear when zeal had urged it to rush to the front. It is as true service *not* to do as to do when the Lord's Word prescribes it. The reason why David was not to build the house is not stated here, but you will find it in 1 Chronicles 28:2, 3. “Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: for me, I had in my heart to build an house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, You shall not build an house for My name, because you have been a man of war, and have shed blood.”

David's wars had been necessary and justifiable and by them the people of the Lord had been delivered. But the Ever Merciful One did not delight in them and would not use for building His Temple an instrument which had been stained with blood. The great Prince of Peace would not have a warrior's hand to pile the palace of His worship, choosing rather that a man whose mind had exercised itself in quieter pursuits should be the founder of the place of rest for the Ark of His Covenant of Peace. He is not so short of instruments as to use a sword for a trowel, or a spear for a measuring rod, especially when these have been dyed in the blood of His creatures.

In your own household affairs you do not use the same implement or utensil for opposite purposes. If David, therefore, is used to smite Philistines, he is not to be employed in erecting a Temple. Solomon, his son, a man of peace, is called to do that holy work. I have sometimes trembled on behalf of our own nation and especially just now, lest its warlike propensities should disqualify it for what has, up to now, appeared its high-

est destiny. If it should resolve to pick a quarrel and wantonly plunge itself into a bloody war, it may come to pass that our God may judge it to be unfit for the accomplishment of His purposes of Grace. Even if it were granted that the war would be most just and right, yet should it be undertaken with solemn reluctance, lest it should deprive our nation of the capacity to be the preacher of righteousness and the herald of the Cross.

With what face can we preach the Gospel of Peace among the heathen if we, ourselves, provoke war? Little wonder would it be if the Lord should say of the English people, "You shall not convert the nations nor build up a Church for My name, because you delight in war and have needlessly shed blood." God grant that all things may be so ordered according to His infinite wisdom that this land may be the true Solomon among the nations and build a Temple for God which shall enclose the whole earth, wherein every language and every nation shall be heard praising and magnifying the Lord! Labor, I pray you, O you servants of the loving Savior, to promote peace if the temporary rage of the multitude may be appeased without carnage!

To return to personal cases—it may happen to any one of you to be called to pass through business or domestic trials in which you may be altogether blameless—and yet you may, at the close of them, find yourself disqualified for certain prominent positions of usefulness, at least for a time. Therefore you may not hope to accomplish certain high and noble purposes which once were laid upon your heart. God may have to say to you afterwards, "Your use lies elsewhere. I will not employ you for this, but, still, I accept you and it was well that it was in your heart." And if He should so see fit, do not repine, but, like David, do all you can towards the work that the man who is to perform it may find materials ready to his hand. David gathered much of the treasure to meet the cost and did it, none the less earnestly, even though another name would outshine his own in connection with the Temple.

Beloved Friends, there is a very sweet consolation in my text for those who may be placed in circumstances similar to those of David. If by any means a man of God becomes disqualified for any form of desirable service which was upon his heart, yet nothing can disqualify him from *prayer*. If he finds it in his heart to pray, he may boldly draw near to God through the sacrifice of Christ. He may still use the way of access which the dying body of our Lord has opened! And he may win his suit at the Throne of Grace. It was well for David that when the building of the Temple was in his heart it could not be, yet when a prayer was in his heart it might be presented with the certainty of acceptance! If you, my Brother or my Sister, are denied the privilege of doing what your heart is set upon, be not angry with God, but set your heart towards Him in prayer. Ask what you will and He will give you the desire of your heart.

By my text three thoughts are suggested. The first is it is well to find prayer in our heart—"therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to You." Secondly, it is pleasant to be able to see how the prayer came there—I shall trace the rise and progress of the prayer of David. And, thirdly, it is most profitable to use a prayer when we find it in

our heart, for David solemnly prayed the prayer which he discovered in his soul.

I. First, then, IT IS WELL TO FIND PRAYER IN OUR HEARTS. In no other place can true prayer be found. Prayer with the lips, prayer with bended knee and uplifted hand is worth nothing if the *heart* is absent. Prayer as a mere matter of form and routine is but the husk—heart-work is the kernel! Words are the oyster shell—the desire of the heart is the pearl. Do not imagine that the Lord looks down with any pleasure upon the tens of thousands of forms of prayer, whether liturgical or extempore, which are presented to Him without heart—such forms rather weary Him than worship Him! They are not adoration, but provocation. The God of Truth can never accept an untruthful devotion. Our prayers must flow from our heart or they will never reach the heart of God.

But prayer is not found in every man's heart. Alas, many of our fellow men never pray! And many who think they pray are yet strangers to that sacred exercise. If an angel were now suddenly to announce that he would mark every man and woman here who has never prayed, I fear that many of you would be in a great fright for fear the mark should be on you! If suddenly the complexion could change and each prayerless person's face should gather blackness, I wonder how many there would be among us whom we should gaze upon with intense surprise! There shall be no such Cain-like mark set upon any of you, but will you set some sort of seal upon your own conscience if you are compelled to confess, "I am one of those who have never prayed"?

What an acknowledgment for a rational being to make! Twenty years of life without a prayer to the Creator of its being! Be astonished, O heavens, and amazed O earth! Perhaps you deny that you are guilty, for you have always said a prayer and would not have gone to sleep at night if you had not done so. Then I pray you remember that you may have repeated holy words from your youth up and yet may have never prayed a prayer with your heart! To pray as the Holy Spirit teaches is a very different thing from the repetition of the choicest words that the best of writers may have composed, or the utterance of random words without thought. Have we prayed with our hearts or not? Remember, a prayerless soul is a Christless soul—and a Christless soul is a *lost* soul—and will soon be cast away forever!

The verses were meant for children, but I cannot help quoting them here, for they, in simple language, express my meaning—

***"I often say my prayers
But do I ever pray?
And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?
I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.
For words without the heart
The Lord will never hear.
Nor will He to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere."***

Further, let me observe that the spirit of prayer, though it is always present in every regenerated heart, is not always alike active. It is not, per-

haps, today nor tomorrow that every Christian will be able to say, "I find in my heart to pray this one particular prayer to God." It may for the present be beyond our standard of Grace and we may therefore be unable to grasp the blessing. In some respects we are not masters of our supplications. You cannot always pray the prayer of faith in reference to any one thing—that prayer is often the distinct gift of God for an occasion. Others may ask your prayers and, sometimes, you may plead very prevalently for them, but at another time that power is absent. You may, at that time, feel no liberty to offer a certain petition, but on the contrary feel held back in the matter. Well, be guided by this inward direction and follow, rather than press forward, in such a case.

There are times with us when we find it in our heart to pray a prayer and then we do so with eagerness and assurance. But we cannot command such seasons at our pleasure. How freely, then, does prayer come from us as the leaping water from the fountain? There is no need to say, "I long to pray," we do pray, we cannot help praying, we have become a mass of prayer! We are walking the streets and cannot pray aloud, but our heart pleads as fast as it beats! We enter our house and attend to family business and, still, the heart keeps pleading as constantly as the lungs are heaving! We go to bed and our last thought is supplication. If we wake in the night, our soul is still making intercession before God and so it continues while the visitation remains. O that it were always so!

Now it is a very happy thing when the Christian finds it in his heart to pray with marked and special fervor unto God. Then he puts no pressure upon himself, nor thinks of supplication as a matter of duty—it has become a pleasant necessity, a sacred passion of the inward life—a holy breathing of the soul not to be restrained. So it should always be, but, alas, most of us have to mourn that in the matter of prayer we are the subjects of many changeful moods. O that we had learned more perfectly how to be praying always in the Holy Spirit! The presence of living prayer in the heart indicates seven things about that heart upon which we will speak with great brevity. First, prayer in the heart proves that the heart is renewed. True prayer dwells not in a dead, corrupt, stony heart!

If you find in your heart to pray a prayer unto God you have assuredly been born again! "Behold he prays," is one of the first and one of the surest marks of the new birth. The faintest movement of the pulse proves that life still remains in a drowning man and though prayer is weak, feeble, fragmentary, yet if it is *there* at all the soul lives unto God! Though to your apprehension your prayer is so poor and broken and unworthy that it cannot be accepted, yet the desire of the soul towards God is an index of spiritual life most hopeful and instructive. Have hope, Brothers and Sisters, as long as you can pray, for none who pray believingly, in the name of Jesus, can ever be cast into Hell! He, whom faith in Jesus has taught to cry to God, shall never hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed," for has not the Lord said, "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"? Be glad, therefore, if you find it in your heart to pray, for it proves that the root of the matter is in you.

To find prayer in the heart proves, next, a reconciled heart. David might have been upset with God and have said, "If I cannot build a Temple I will

do nothing, for I have set my heart upon it and I have already laid up treasure for it. It is a laudable project and it has had the sanction of the Prophet and I am hardly used to having my designs rejected.” There are some professors who would do a great thing if they might, but if they are not permitted to act a shining part in it, they sulk and get angry with their God. David, when his proposal was set aside, found it in his heart not to murmur, but to pray! Job asks concerning the hypocrite, “Will he always call upon God?” and he meant to say that only true and loyal hearts will continue to pray when things go hard with them. Let this be a test for you and for me. Can you pray, Brothers and Sisters, now that the delight of your eyes has been cut off by death? Can you pray now that your substance is diminished and your bodily health is failing? Then I take it as a sign that you have submitted yourself unto God and are at peace with Him, being reconciled to Him by His Grace. To cease from complaining and to give the heart to prayer is the sign of a soul renewed and reconciled.

Prayer is also the index of a spiritual heart. David sat in his house of cedar—it was costly and carved with great art—but it did not draw his mind away from God. It has too often happened that *prospering* professors have become *proud* professors and have forgotten God. When they were poor they associated with Christian Brethren whom they felt pleasure in recognizing. But now that they have gotten a large estate they no longer know the poor people of God and they spend their Sabbaths where they can meet with a little “society,” and move among their “equals,” as they call them—they, being so very much superior to the holy men and women whom once they held in honor! Such folks become high and mighty like Nebuchadnezzar—and as they walk their grounds or sit in their painted chambers they say, “Behold this great Babylon which I have built.” A “self-made man,” risen from the ranks, comes to have a name like the name of the great men that are upon the face of the earth—is not this something?

Oftentimes has it happened that these things have turned away the hearts of professors from the God who loaded them with benefits. It was not so with David! In his cedar palace he found it in his heart to pray. The more he had, the more he loved his God. The more he received, the more he desired to give thanks to the Lord for his benefits. Plants, when they are root-bound in their pots, become poor weak things and so do men’s hearts when they are earth-bound, doting upon their riches! As a traveler finds it difficult to move when his feet stick in the mud of a miry way, so do some men make small progress heavenward because they are hindered by their own wealth. Happy is that man who has riches but does not suffer riches to have *him*—who uses wealth and does not abuse it by idolizing it—but seasons all with the Word of God and prayer.

Prayer in the heart also proves an enlightened heart. A man who does not pray is in the dark. He knows not his own needs, otherwise he would make supplication. If he understood his own danger—the temptations which surround him—and the corruptions which are within him, he would be incessantly in prayer! He who has left off praying has surely lost his wits. If the Holy Spirit has taught us anything, He has taught us this—we must pray without ceasing. David prayed, too, as an enlightened

man because he felt that devotion was due to God. Since the Lord had done so much for him, he must worship and adore. "Therefore has Your servant," he says, "found in his heart to pray this prayer to You." He who is well taught by the Spirit of God knows his position to be that of a humble dependent who is bound to reverence his God with all his heart and, therefore, he daily sings, "Your vows are upon me, O God, I will render praise unto You."

The heart in which prayer is found constantly welling up is, also, a lively heart. We do not all possess lively hearts, nor do we all keep them when we get them. Some men appear to have fatty degeneration of the heart after a spiritual manner since their heart acts very feebly in prayer. They are lethargic and lifeless in devotion. Do we not all find ourselves, at times, in a cold state in reference to prayer? Brothers and Sisters, I believe that when we cannot pray, it is time that we prayed more than ever. And if you answer, "But how can that be?" I would say—pray to pray, pray for prayer—pray for the spirit of supplication. Do not be content to say, "I would pray if I could." No, but if you cannot pray, pray till you can! He who can row down stream with a flowing tide and a fair wind is but a poor oarsman compared with the man who can pull against wind and tide and still make headway. This our soul must endeavor to do.

But, Beloved, how wonderful it is when you can pray and cannot stop—when your heart pours forth devotion as the roses shed their perfume, or the sun gives his light! I love to feel my soul on the wing like the birds in spring, which are always singing and flitting from bough to bough, full of life and vigor. Oh to have the soul mounting on eagle's wings and no longer groping in the earth like a mole! To be instant, constant, eager at prayer—this is health, vigor and delight! To feel the heart in prayer like the chariots of Amminadib outstripping the wind—this is a joy worth worlds! Beloved, this finding in the heart to pray proves, in the sixth place, that the heart is in communion with God, for what is prayer but the breath of God in man returning from where it came?

Prayer is a telephone by which God speaks in man. His Heaven is far away but His voice sounds in our soul! Prayer is a phonograph—God speaks into our soul and then our soul speaks out, again, what the Lord has spoken! Conversation must always be two-sided. God speaks to us in this Book—we must reply to Him in prayer and praise. If you do not pray, my Brothers and Sisters, why, then, you have shut the gates of Heaven against yourself and there is neither coming in nor going out between you and your Lord! Prayer keeps up a heavenly commerce acceptable to God and enriching to your own souls. Do you find yourself mightily moved to pray? Then the Lord is very near to you! The Beloved has come into His garden to eat His pleasant fruits—take care to feast Him with your love!

Prayer in the heart is the echo of the footsteps of the Bridegroom of our souls who is seeking communion with us! Open wide the doors of your soul and let Him in and then detain Him and constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us." When we find prayer in the heart, we may know that our heart is accepted of God and the prayer is, too. Brothers and Sisters, when a desire comes to you again and again and again, take it as a favorable omen regarding your supplication. If the Lord should especially

prompt you to any one desire—laying your child, perhaps, more than usual upon your heart, or causing the name of a friend constantly to occur to you so that you find yourself frequently praying for him—take this as a token from the Lord that He would have you turn your thoughts in that direction and that a blessing is in store for you. If a certain Church which seems to need revival is laid upon your soul, or a township or a district, mark well the fact.

Suppose you find your heart going out towards a special country or city, bearing your mind there and working to pray with tears and entreaties—grieving because of its sin and entreating that God would remember and forgive—be sure that this is a prophecy of good to that place and redouble your petitions! When the gale blows, the navigator spreads his sails to catch the wind! And when the Spirit, who blows where He wills, comes upon you, influencing you to this or that, be sure to spread all sails! Reckon that the inclination to pray is the foretaste of the coming blessing! As coming events cast their shadows before them, your desire is the shadow of the mercy which God is sending down to you. He moves you to pray for it because He, Himself, is about to give it! Thus I have shown that it is well when we find it in our hearts to pray a prayer, for it proves the heart to be, in many respects, in a healthy condition.

II. Now, secondly, IT IS PLEASANT TO BE ABLE TO SEE HOW THE PRAYER CAME INTO THE HEART. “I find it in my heart,” says David. Well, David, how did it come there? I answer as he did *not*, that any true prayer which is found in the human heart comes there by the Holy Spirit! If there is anything excellent in us, even if it is only a *desire* to pray acceptably, it is of the Holy Spirit’s creation and unto Him be all the praise! But the *modus operandi*, the way in which the Spirit operates upon us is somewhat in this fashion.

First of all, He puts the promise into the Word of God. David tells us very plainly that it was because God had revealed such-and-such promises that, therefore, he says, “Has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You.” The Lord gives the promise and that becomes the parent of our prayer. For first there are some mercies we should never have thought of praying for if He had not promised them. They would never have suggested themselves to us and we would not have known our need of them unless the supply had taught us and the promise of God, itself, incited us to the desire. There are other mercies for which we should not have dared to pray if the promise had not encouraged us.

We could not have had the heart to ask such great things if the Lord had not promised them to us. So that the Word of God suggests the desire and then encourages us to hope that the desire will certainly be fulfilled. Moreover when promise comes very close home to a man, as it did to David when it was spoken personally to him by the Prophet, it vivifies the soul, causes the mind to realize the blessing and both intensifies desire and gives grasp and grip to faith. We should not have felt the gift to be real had it not been placed before us in plain words. Brothers and Sisters, this is how our prayers come into our heart!

The Word of God suggests them, encourages us to seek them and then gives us a realizing power so that we plead with eagerness and believe

with force. In saying, “therefore,” David means not only that the Word of God had put the prayer into his mind but that his whole meditation had led him to the finding of this prayer in his heart. Had he not been sitting before the Lord in quiet thought, he might never have noticed the work of the Spirit upon his soul. But inward searching brought the right prayer to light. Will you kindly look through the chapter while I very briefly sum up its contents and show that each item excited David to pray? When the king sat before the Lord and spoke out his heart, his first word was about the Lord’s past goodness to him and his own insignificance—“Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me here?”

Brethren, who are we that God should have been so good to us? But inasmuch as His Grace to us has been amazing, do we not find it in our heart to pray a prayer to Him that He would bless us still more? Can you not enquire of the Lord in the words of the hymn which we sang just now—

***“After so much mercy past
Can You let me sink at last?”***

He has been mindful of us, He will bless us. Let our memory of His past loving kindness excite us to prayer for present and future favors. David then passed on to speak of the greatness of the promise—“This was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord God; but You have spoken also of Your servant’s house for a great while to come.” We also have received exceedingly great and precious promises. And since God has promised so much, will we not be much in prayer? Shall He be large in promising and shall we be narrow in asking? Shall He stand before us and say, “Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive,” and will we be content with slender, starved petitions? Beggars seldom need pressing to beg and when a promise is given them, they usually put the widest possible construction upon it and urge it with great zeal! Will it not be well to take a leaf out of their book? Come, Brothers and Sisters, the argument is strong with those who have spiritual sense—the greatness of the promise encourages us to find many a prayer in our heart!

Then he speaks of the surprising “manner” of God. “Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” He saw that God acted far more graciously than the most generous human beings act towards their fellows. He perceived that “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God’s ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts,” and therefore he opened his mouth wide in prayer. Was he not right in doing so? And are we right, my Brothers and Sisters, if we do not imitate his example? We are advised by the wise man not to go into our brother’s house in the day of our calamity. And the same wisdom would move us not to ask too much from friends and neighbors. But no such prudence is necessary towards our Friend above! To Him we may come at all hours and to Him we may plead the largest requests!

Since the Lord deals not as men deal, but gives liberally and upbraids not. Since He opens the windows of the treasury of Heaven and is pleased to make no stint whatever in the showers of His liberality, let us wait upon Him continually. His unspeakable love should encourage us to abound in prayer. Then the king goes on to speak of God’s free Grace, which was another argument to pray. “For Your Word’s sake, and accord-

ing to Your own heart, have You done all these great things to make Your servant know them." The Lord had entered into covenant with him, not because David had merited so great an honor, but entirely for His own mercy's sake. David recognizes the freeness and Sovereignty of the Grace and seems to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. If You have loved me so, then am I bold to ask great things of You. If You wait not for the merit of man, nor for human merit, then will I ask You still further to bless me, unworthy though I am, to the praise of the glory of Your name."

Pray mightily, my Brothers and Sisters, since God sits on a Throne of Grace! When the choicest treasures are to be had for the asking, who can refuse to pray? Then He proceeded to mention the greatness of God, "Why You are great, O Lord God: for there is none like You, neither is there any God beside You." Surely, to a great God we should bring great prayers! We dishonor Him by the fewness of our petitions and the littleness of our desires. My Soul, enlarge your desires! Be hungry, be thirsty, be greedy after Divine Grace, for whatever you desire you shall have, provided it is, indeed, for your good. Your desire to obtain shall be the test of your capacity to receive! Brethren, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. "Up to now have you asked nothing in My name," said the Lord Jesus to His disciples.

And He might say the same to us, for all we have ever asked comes to next to nothing compared with what He is prepared to give, compared with what He *will* give when once He has tutored us into something like largeness of heart in prayer like that of Solomon, of whom we read, "God gave him largeness of heart even as the sand which is on the sea shore." We need to be delivered from narrow conceptions of God and limited desires in prayer, that we may ask of infinity with suitable capacity of soul, and so may receive Grace upon Grace and be filled with all the fullness of God! David closed his meditation by speaking of God's love to His people, saying, "And what one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for You great things and terrible, for Your land, before Your people, which You redeemed to You from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For You have confirmed to Yourself Your people Israel to be a people unto You forever: and You, Lord, are become their God."

Well, since the Lord loves His people so intensely, we may well be encouraged to ask great things for ourselves and especially to seek great things for the Church. We are no strangers to God—His chosen are neither aliens nor foreigners—they are His children, dear to His heart! And if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more sure is it that our heavenly Father will give good gifts to them that ask Him? When you pray for Zion, plead for great prosperity and speak with boldness, for you are asking blessings upon those whom God delights to bless, asking prosperity for that Church which is as the apple of His eye!

I will sum up this point as to the pleasure of seeing how prayer comes to be in our heart, by briefly tracing the line of beauty along which it runs. First of all the thought and purpose of blessing arises in the heart of

God—David perceived that to be the case, for in the 21st verse he says, “For Your Word’s sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things.” Prayer owes its origin to the heart of God! The next stage is reached when it is revealed by Inspiration—the Lord sent Nathan to tell David of His gracious intent towards him. The thought has passed, you see, from God’s secret purpose into God’s revealed Word, and now it filters into the heart of David and David sends it back to God in prayer! Prayer, like our Lord Jesus, comes forth from God and returns to God! That is the pedigree and history of all true supplication. It is like the mist which you see in the early morning, rising from the plains towards Heaven in the form of clouds. It is like incense from an altar.

How did it get there? First of all, the moisture was in the heavens, in the secret treasuries of God. Then came a day when it fell in drops of rain and did not return void, but watered the earth. Afterwards, when the blessed sun shone forth, it steamed up again, to return to the place from where it came. The clouds are like the Divine Decree—who shall enter into the secret place where Jehovah hides His purposes? The rain is like the Word of God with its sparkling drops of precious promises—the outcome of the mysterious purposes of God. These revealed blessings we see standing in pools in the Scriptures. Turn to the Book or listen to the Lord’s servants whom He helps to speak and you shall hear a sound of abundance of rain!

This rain waters the soul of man and when the warm love of God comes shining on the saturated heart it rises up in earnest petitions. Prayer is never lost, for though the mist which rises in yonder valley may never fall again into the same place, it drops somewhere! And so, true prayer, though it comes not back into the offerer’s own bosom, is fruitful in good in some way or other. The result of honest hearty prayer may not be distinctly this or that according to your mind or mine, but it is always good. Supplication is never wasted, it is preserved in the Divine reservoir and in time its influence visits the earth and waters it with “the river of God, which is full of water.”

When you find a rare flower by the roadside and wonder how it came there, for it is no indigenous weed but a fair stranger from another clime, it is pleasant to trace out its way to the place it beautifies. And even so, when you find a prayer in your heart, it is gladsome to see how it comes forth *from* the heart of God, *by* the Word of God, to blossom in the garden of *your* soul!

III. In the third place IT IS VERY PROFITABLE TO USE A PRAYER WHEN WE FIND IT IN OUR HEART. Notice the phraseology of my text. He says, “Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You.” Not to say this prayer, but to *pray* this prayer. There is great force in the expression. Some prayers are never prayed, but are like arrows which are never shot from the bow. Scarcely may I call them *prayers*, for they are such as to form, matter and verbiage, but they are *said*, not *prayed*. The praying of prayer is the main matter. Sometimes, Beloved, we may have a prayer in our hearts and may neglect the voice of the Lord within our soul—and if so, we are great losers.

What does praying a prayer mean? It means, first, that you present it to God with fervency. Pray as if you meant it. Throw your whole soul into the petition. Entreat the Lord with tears and cries. If you do not prevail at first, yet come to Him importunately again and again with the resolve that since He has written the prayer in your heart, you will not take “no” for an answer. Heat your prayers red hot! In naval warfare, in the old days, our men of war fired red hot shot—try that system, for nothing is so powerful in prayer as fervency and importunity. Pray *spiritually*, also, for the text says, “I have found it in my heart to pray this prayer to *You*.”

It is of no use pray to yourself or to the four walls of your room. Some persons even pray to those who are around them, like the preacher of whose prayer the remark was made that, “it was one of the finest prayers that ever was presented to a Boston audience.” I am afraid many prayers are presented to *audiences* rather than to God. This should not be. Moreover, when you find a prayer in your heart, do not talk it over nor say to another, “I feel such-and-such a desire”—but go and pour it out before *God*! Speak it into the *Divine* ear! Realize that God is there as distinctly as if you could see Him, for that is the way to make a proper use of the prayer which is in your heart.

Pray with specialty. The text indicates that—“I have found it in my heart to pray this prayer.” Know what you pray. Prayer is not putting your hand into a bag and pulling out what comes first. Oh, no! There must be definite desires and specific requests. Think carefully about it and ask for what you need and for nothing else but what you need. Pray this prayer. David had a promise about his house and his prayer was about his house—that God would bless and establish it. Much of what we think to be prayer is really *playing* at *praying*. The archers in the English armies of old, with their arrows a cloth-yard long, when they met the foe, took steady aim and they sorely galled the foe! Give your little boy his bow and arrow and what does he do? He shoots at random and sends his arrows all over the place—he *plays* at archery.

A good deal of praying is of that sort. There is no steadily taking aim at the white and drawing the bow with strength—and watching the arrow with anxiety. Lord, teach us to pray! We ought to pray, too, dear Friends, when we find prayer in our hearts, with much boldness. He says, “I found in my heart to pray,” that is, he had the heart to pray, the courage to pray! The promise influenced him to be bold with God. Some men fail in reverence for God, but far more fail in holy boldness towards God! Men who are mighty for God are generally famous for courage with Him. Look at Luther! They say it was wonderful to hear him preach, but a hundred times more so to hear him pray! There was an awful reverence about that heroic man, but there was also such a childlike simplicity of daring that he seemed as though he did really lay hold of God.

That is the way—try it in your chamber this afternoon. Be bold with God! Find it in your heart to pray this prayer unto Him. And do so promptly. Let promptness mark your prayer as it did that of David. He did not wait a week or two after he had obtained the promise—he went straight away and sat down before the Lord and began to plead the Divine Word. He said, “Do as You have said.” He found the petition in his heart

and before it could lose its way, again, he brought it before God! He was studying his soul and as he observed its movements, he saw a prayer lift up its head. "Ah," he said, "I will seize it." And he held it fast and presented it before God—and so obtained a blessing. I suggest, dear Friends, to those whose hearts feel touched in the matter, that we should *today* make special supplication to God as to the peace of nations, now so miserably endangered.

You will meet as teachers in the school. You will meet in the classes. And others of you will be at home in meditation this afternoon. But you can all, in various ways, help in the common intercession. At this moment it is upon my heart very heavily to pray this prayer to God and I wish you would all make a point of joining in it—"Send us peace in our days, good Lord." Not as politicians, but as followers of Christ we are bound to entreat our Lord to prevent the cruel war which is now threatened. A curse will surely fall upon all who are causing the strife, but blessed are the peacemakers! I believe that if all Christians would join in pleading with God, they would do much more than all the public meetings and all the petitions to the Houses of Parliament or to the Queen will ever accomplish. O Lord, prevent war, we pray You!

Another thing. During this week the various societies are holding their public meetings and I suggest, if you find it in your hearts, that you spend a little extra time in praying to God to bless His Church and its mission work. There will, also, be meetings held of great importance, this week, in connection with certain religious bodies. There are denominations which are sadly diseased with skepticism. But a healthy love for the Truth of God remains with many and, therefore, there will come a struggle between the evangelical and the philosophical parties. This week will witness such a struggle. Pray God to send the conquest to the right, to strengthen hesitating Brethren and to give decision to those who have long been too timorous in their actions. Pray that power and guidance from on high may be given to those who hold the orthodox faith. I find it in my heart to pray so and shall be glad to know that others are agreeing with me.

Find it in your hearts, too, at this time, to pray for the work of this, our own Church, and I call special attention to the work of our tract distributors. We have, now, nearly 90 Brothers going from village to village, from house to house, distributing the Word of God and preaching it to those who in the hamlets might otherwise be left without the Gospel. Find it in your hearts to invoke a blessing upon them! And, if there is anything that is more upon your heart than another, be wise enough to hedge in a quarter of an hour in order to pray the prayer unto the Lord. Shut yourself up and say, "I have business to do with the Master. I feel a call within my heart to speak with the King."

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, when such a season comes upon you, I would most humbly but most affectionately ask those of you who are benefited by my ministry to whisper my name into the King's ear, for I have much need of His Grace and help. May the Lord accept your petitions, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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PRAYER FOUND IN THE HEART

NO. 2869

**A SERMON
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***“Therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You.”
2 Samuel 7:27.***

It is a very blessed thing for a child of God to be anxious to glorify his Heavenly Father, whether his wish is realized or not. The strong desire to magnify God is acceptable to Him and is an indication of spiritual health. It is certain, in the long run, to bring blessing to our own souls and I have frequently noticed that when we earnestly desire to do something special for the Lord, He generally does something for us very much of the same kind. David wished to build a house for God. “No,” says Jehovah, “you have been a man of war and I will not employ a warrior in spiritual business. But I will build *you* a house.” So, although David may not build a house for God, it is well that the plan of it is in his heart and God, in return, builds up his house, and sets his son and his son’s son upon the throne after him. But, my dear Friend, if you should not find an opportunity to do all that is in your heart, yet, nevertheless, it is well that it is there. Carry out the project if you can, but if you cannot, it may be that as you have desired to deal with the Lord, so will He deal with you. If you have sown sparingly, you shall reap sparingly. If you have sown liberally, you shall reap largely, for, often and often, the Lord’s dealings with His own people are a sort of echo to their hearts of their dealings with Him.

Sometimes it happens that God will not let His servants do what they would most of all like to do. David had long been storing up gold and silver in great quantities that he might build that house for the Lord. It had been the great project of his life that he might make a fit sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant. “I dwell,” he said, “in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within curtains.” The dream of his life was that he might build a magnificent temple which would be supremely gorgeous for architecture and rich in all the treasures of the ends of the earth—that there the Ark of his God might be appropriately housed. But the Lord would not have it so. David might pray about it and think about it, and plan about it and save his money for it, but the Lord would not have it so. It was not in that particular way that David was to serve his God.

And I have known some good Christian young men who felt that they must be preachers. They had not the proper gifts and qualifications for

the ministry, but they felt that they must preach—so they have strived very hard, but at all points they have met with rebuffs. People who have heard them once, have been quite satisfied, but have not desired to hear them again. Doors have been shut against them, no conversions have followed their efforts and thus God has said to each one of them, “Not so, My son. Not in that way shall you serve Me.” And there are others who have had other plans in their heads—Brothers and Sisters who have arranged wonderful schemes and plans which they have dreamed over and said, “Thus and thus will we serve God.” Yet, hitherto, my Brother, you have had to keep to the workman’s bench. And you, my Sister, have had to keep to nursing those little children. Up till now you have not been very successful in any special path of usefulness, or that which is commonly thought to be the path of usefulness. But God knows best and He has uses for all the vessels in His house—and it is not right for any one vessel to say, “I will be used here, or there, or not at all.” It is for *God* to use us as He pleases!

Every private soldier would like to be an officer, but it is only a very few who ever will be. And if every private soldier *could* be an officer, what sort of an army would it be where all were officers and none were men in the ranks? So we would, perhaps, each of us, like to do something more remarkable than we *have done*, but it is for our great Commander to say to this man, “Stand here,” or to that man, “Go there.” And it ought to be equally a matter of contentment to us whether God permits us to serve Him, here or there. I think it was good Mr. Jay who used to say that if there were two angels in Heaven and God wanted one of them to go and be the ruler of a kingdom, and the other to sweep a crossing, the two angels would not have the slightest dispute as to which post they would have, provided that they knew they had the Lord’s command to occupy either position. Brother, if ever the Lord should rebuff you and seem to refuse that which you desire to offer Him, do not sulk—do not get into a bad spirit, as some have done in similar circumstances—but know that the very essence of Christian service is to be willing *not* to serve in that particular way if, by not serving, God would be the more glorified! Be willing, O vessel in the house of the Lord, to be hung up on a nail in the wall. Be willing to be laid aside in a corner if so God would be glorified, for thus was it with David. God would not let him erect the temple which he wished to build, but He gave him great blessings in return for his desires. And then David, instead of sulking and saying, “Well, then, as I cannot have my own will, I will do nothing at all,” went in and sat before the Lord and blessed and praised Him—he never uttered one grumbling or surly word—but blessed the name of the Lord from the beginning of his meditation even to its close. Oh, to have a heart molded after the same fashion!

In the midst of David’s memorable address to God, we meet with this suggestive expression—“Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You.” I am going to speak upon that subject in this way. First, concerning David’s prayer—*how did he come by it?* Secondly, *how*

came this prayer to be in his heart? And thirdly, how may we get into such a condition that we shall find prayers in our hearts?

I. First, then, HOW DID DAVID COME BY HIS PRAYER? He tells us that he found it in his heart—"Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You."

Then it is pretty clear that *he looked for it in his heart*. How many men seem to begin to pray without really thinking about prayer! They rush, without preparation or thought, into the Presence of God. Now, no loyal subject would seek an audience of his sovereign, to present a petition, without having first carefully prepared it. But many seem to think there is no need to look for a prayer, or to find one, when they approach the Mercy Seat. They appear to imagine that they have only to repeat certain words and to stand or kneel in a certain attitude—and that is prayer. But David did not make that mistake. He found his prayer in his heart. David and his heart were well acquainted—he had long been accustomed to talk with himself. There are some men who know a thousand other people, but who do not know themselves! The greatest stranger to them in the whole world is their own heart. They have never looked into it, never talked with it, never examined it, never questioned it. They follow its evil devices, but they scarcely know that they have a heart, they so seldom look into it. But David, when he wanted to pray, went and looked in his heart to see what he could find there—and he found in his heart to pray this prayer to God.

This leads me to say, dear Friends, that *the best place in which to find a prayer is to find it in your heart*. Some would have fetched down a book and they would have said, "Let us see—what is the day of the month—how many Sundays after Advent? This is the proper prayer for today." But David did not go to a book for his prayer—he turned to his heart to see what he could find there that he might pray unto God. Others of us would, perhaps, have been content to find a prayer in our heads. We have been accustomed to extemporize in prayer and so, perhaps, bowing the knee, we would have felt that the stream of supplication would flow because we are so habituated to speaking with God in prayer. Ah, dear Friend, it is no worse to find a prayer in a book than to find it in your head! It is very much the same thing whether the prayer is printed or is extemporized—unless it comes from the heart—it is equally dead in either case.

How many, too, have found a prayer upon their lips! It is a very common thing with those who pray in Prayer Meetings and those of us who pray in public, for our lips to run much faster than our hearts move. And it is one of the things we need to cry to God to keep us from, lest we should be run away with by our own tongues, as men are, sometimes, run away with by their horses which they cannot restrain. And you know the horse never goes faster than when he has very little to carry. And, sometimes, words will come at a very rapid rate when there is very little real prayer conveyed by them. This is not as it ought to be with us. We must look into our hearts for the desire to pray—and if we do not find it

in our hearts to pray a prayer, let us rest assured that we shall not be accepted before the Throne of God.

How was it that David found this prayer in his heart? I think it was *because his heart had been renewed by Divine Grace*. Prayer is a living thing—you cannot find a living prayer in a dead heart. Why seek you the living among the dead, or search the sepulcher to find the signs and tokens of life? No, Sir, if you have not been made alive by the Grace of God, you cannot pray! The dead cannot pray and the spiritually dead cannot pray. But the moment you begin to pray, it is a sign that life has been given to you. Ananias knew that Saul was a living soul when God said to him, “Behold, he prays.” “It is all right,” said Ananias, “for the Lord must have quickened his heart.” David found this prayer in his heart because his was a living heart!

And he found it there, also, *because his was a believing heart*. How can a man pray if he does not believe in God, or if he merely thinks that there *may* be a supernatural Being, somewhere or other in the universe, but that He is not near—and cannot be made to hear—or is not a living personality, or, if He is, He is too great to care about us, or to listen to the words of a man? But when the Lord has taught you the Truth of God about His own Existence and His real Character—when He has come so near to you that you know that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—then, in that believing heart of yours, prayer will spring up as the corn springs up in the furrows of the field! The Lord, who has sown in your heart the seed of faith, will make that seed to spring up in the green blade of prayer. It must be so, but, until you believe in God, you cannot pray. It would be useless for me to say to some men, “You should pray,” when I recollect that Christ has said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” And that is what these men cannot do. How can they, therefore, pray acceptably? “He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Where there is that true faith in God, there is fervent prayer in the heart, but nowhere else!

David’s was also *a serious heart*. Some men’s hearts are flippant, trifling, full of levity. God forbid that we should condemn holy cheerfulness! As oil to the wheels of a machine, so is cheerfulness to a man’s conversation, but there is a frothiness, a superficiality, a frivolity which is far too common. Some men do not seem to think seriously about anything. They have no settled principles. They are “everything by starts, and nothing long.” “The Vicar of Bray” is their first cousin. Perhaps they have scarcely as much principle as he had, for they do not so steadily seek their own interests and scarcely seek any interest at all but that of the transient pleasure of the hour. If that is your case, I do not wonder that you cannot pray! A man says, “I cannot find prayer in my heart.” No, how could you? Yours is a heart full of chaff, full of dust, full of rubbish—a heart tangled and overgrown with weeds—a sluggard’s heart, where grow the nettles of evil desire and unholy passion—where live the docks and thistles of idleness and neglect. Oh, may God grant us the Grace to have serious hearts—hearts that are in solemn earnest—hearts that are in-

tense—hearts that can really give due heed to things according to their merits and that give to eternal things their chief concern, because eternal things deserve them best. David's heart was a serious heart and, therefore, he found this prayer in it.

And, once again, David's was *a humble heart*, for a man who is proud will not pray. A man who is self-righteous will not pray, except it is in the fashion of the Pharisee, and that was no prayer at all. But a man, humbly conscious of his soul's needs, and realizing the guilt of his sins—that is the man to pour out his heart in prayer before the living God! I pray the Lord graciously to break our hearts, for, unless our hearts are broken in penitence, we shall never find in them a real prayer unto God.

There are some of you who have got on wonderfully since your Lord called you by His Grace. You were wretched enough when He looked at you, cast out in the open field, covered with blood and filthiness. And He washed you, clothed you, nourished you and now He has even begun to use you in His service and you are already beginning to be rather proud that He has given you some success. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, not to pilfer any of the Glory that belongs to God alone! Never begin to throw up your caps and to cry, "Well done!" It is all up with us if we do that. Stay down low, my Brother. Stay down low, my Sister. The lower we are and the more we fear and tremble—not through unbelief, mark you, (that kind of fear I denounce with all my heart), but with that really *believing* trembling and *believing* fear that grows out of genuine love to Christ and is not inconsistent with that love—the more we have of that sort of fear, the more securely shall we walk and the more will it be safe for God to trust us with His goodness! When your ship floats very high upon the water, I hope that you will not have much sail spread, or else the vessel will almost certainly go over. But when it floats low, almost down to the Plimsoll line, you may crowd on as much sail as you like. If you carry but little ballast and you have huge sails up aloft, the first gust of wind will topple you over. But if you are well ballasted—that is to say, if you are weighed down with a sense of your own unworthiness—you will weather any gale that may come upon you, God the Holy Spirit being in the vessel with you and holding the helm!

I pause here a moment just to ask each one—Do you pray? Do you present to God prayers that come from your heart? I do not ask whether you use a form of prayer, or not, but does your heart really go with the prayer you offer? I think I hear someone say, "I always say my prayers." Ah, my dear Friend, there is as great a difference between saying prayers and really praying as there was between the dead child and the living one that were brought before Solomon! Saying prayers is not praying! Why, you might as well say your prayers backward as forward unless your heart goes with them! It is quite extraordinary how some people can use a form of prayer without any thought whatever as to its meaning. Some time ago, a man, 70 years of age, was asked if he prayed. He replied that he always had prayed, and he would tell the enquirer the prayer he used. It turned out that he still persisted in repeating what his mother taught him when he was a child, "Pray, God, bless Father and Mother, and

make me a good boy.” He had got those words so deeply engraved upon his memory that he still kept to them at his advanced age! Naturally, you smile at the story, yet it is very pitiful. It may be an extreme instance, but still it is a clear instance of what I mean—that there is a way of merely saying prayers which is rather a mockery of God than a real approach to Him such as He desires.

“Well,” says one, “I never pray.” I question the truth of that assertion, but if it is true, there is another thing that I do know and that is this—the time will come when you will want to pray. Let me explain what I mean when I say that I question your assertion about never praying. I have heard men pray who would have thought themselves insulted if they had been told that they did. What awful prayers they have presented to God when they have imprecated upon their souls, bodies, eyes, limbs, children and everything else, the most terrible curses from God! There are some men who will do this at the least provocation. O Sirs, mind that God does not grant you your wicked requests! I am afraid that when an ungodly man prays in that shameless way, he does find his prayer in his heart—and I am also afraid that his heart must be full of damnation, or he would not find so many oaths in it. That which comes out of a man is what is in him, and when you hear a man swear, you know that there is a deal of “swear” in his heart, for the language in which he dares to imprecate God’s vengeance proves how alienated his heart must be from God.

I would remind you, who do not pray, that you will need to pray one day. If there were to be a pledge exacted from you that you never would pray to God—if you were offered money to never pray—suppose you took the money and promised never to pray? I know what you would think—you would say to yourself, “What shall I do with this money? It is the price of my soul’s salvation.” It would strike you at once that it was an awful thing to never be allowed to pray and you would feel that you had sold yourself to the devil—body and soul—and you would be in dire trouble. Well, but as you say that you never pray, you might as well take the money that is offered to you. As you do not pray, I do not see what use the privilege of prayer is to you. “If it is of any use to pray to God,” you say, “I shall pray at the last.” Then pray now, for you never know what may be your last moment! Who knows how close you may be to your grave even while you are sitting in your pew? You saw one friend faint, just now, and we have seen hearers fall back dead even while gathered in the congregation! God grant that we may not see it again! Still, the fact that it has happened is a loud call to all of us bidding us begin to pray!

Thus I have shown you where David found his prayer. He found it in his heart.

II. Now, secondly, HOW CAME DAVID’S PRAYER TO BE IN HIS HEART?

I answer that he found it in his heart *because the Lord put it there*. Every true heart-prayer that is accepted of God, first came from God. The Lord Jesus passed by David’s heart and threw this prayer in at the win-

dow and then, when the good man went down to look for a prayer, he found this prayer lying on the floor of his heart ready for him to use.

How does God put prayers into a man's heart? I answer, first, *He instructs us how to pray*. We, none of us, know how to pray aright till we have been to the school of the Holy Spirit. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit comes and shows us our need. Thus we see what to pray for. He also shows us what Christ has provided for us and thus we see what we may hope to obtain. He shows us, too, that the way to God is through the precious blood of Jesus and He leads us along that crimson, blood-sprinkled road and so, by His instruction, He puts the prayer into our hearts.

In the next place, He puts it there *by inclining us to pray*. Benjamin Beddome wrote—

**“When God inclines the heart to pray
He has an ear to hear”—**

and his short hymn contains a great Truth of God. God bends the heart to pray and, oftentimes, He does this by filling us with sorrow and then, in the day of our distress, we cry unto Him. But I have also known Him do it in the sweeter way, as He did with David, by filling the heart with joy till we have been so glad and grateful that we have felt that we must pray, as David did on another occasion, when he said, “Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.”

So, the Lord puts prayer into our heart by instructing us how to pray and by inclining us to pray.

Then He puts prayer into the heart *by encouragement*. You notice that my text begins with, “Therefore.” “Therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You.” What does David mean by that, “therefore”? Why, God had promised to do great things for him and, my Brother or Sister, you may always safely ask for that which God has promised to give! When He gives you the promise of anything, He does as good as say to you, “Come, My child, ask for this. Be not slow to come to Me with your requests.” If the Lord has said that He will bestow any blessing, what greater encouragement to pray can you possibly desire? But this promise, according to the Hebrew, had been given to David in a very special manner. In our version, it is rendered, “You have revealed to Your servant,” but the marginal reading is, “You have opened the ear of Your servant.” A promise in the Bible is often a promise to a deaf ear—but the promise, applied by the Spirit of God, goes right through the outer organ and penetrates to the ear of the soul! I am sure, dear Friends, that you can never be backward in prayer when God opens your ear and puts a promise into it. The richness, the sweetness, the sureness, the preciousness of the promise, when the Holy Spirit seals it home to the heart, makes a man go to his knees—he cannot help doing so—and thus the Lord greatly encourages the needy soul to pray.

I will not keep you longer upon this point when I have just said that I believe God puts prayers into our hearts *by a sense of His general goodness*. We see how kind and good He is to the sons of men as a whole and, therefore, we pray to Him. By His special goodness to His own chosen

people, we see still more of His compassion and tenderness, and so we are moved to pray to Him. Especially does He put prayer into our hearts when He gives us a sight of the Cross. We see there how greatly Jesus loved us and, therefore, we pray. We rightly argue that He who gave Jesus for us will deny to us nothing that is for our good and, therefore, again we pray. Often are we stirred up to pray by the recollection of former answers to prayer and, sometimes, by observing how God hears other men and other women pray. Anyhow, it is a blessed thing when the Lord comes by and scatters the seeds of prayer in our hearts so that when we want to pray, we have only to look within our own renewed nature and there we find the prayer that we shall do well to pray unto God!

III. Our last question, upon which I must speak but briefly, is this. **WHAT MUST YOU AND I DO IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO FIND PRAYERS IN OUR HEARTS?**

Ah, dear Friends, I am afraid that *some of you can do nothing in this matter until, first of all, your hearts are renewed by Grace.* “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” No one. And who can fetch an acceptable prayer out of an unaccepted person? No one. So, Sinner, you must first come to Jesus, confessing your sin and looking to His dear wounds, and finding a broken heart within you as the result of His pierced heart. And when the Lord has looked upon you in His pardoning love, then you will find many prayers in your heart!

I asked a young friend, “Did you pray before conversion?” She answered that she did pray “after a sort.” I then enquired, “What is the difference between your present prayers and those you offered before you knew the Lord?” Her answer was, “Then, I said my prayers. But, now, I mean them. Then, I said the prayers which other people taught me. But now I find them in my heart.” There is good reason to cry, “Eureka!” when we find prayer in our heart. Holy Bradford would never cease praying or praising till he found his heart thoroughly engaged in the holy exercise. If it is not in my heart to pray, I must pray till it is. But, oh, the delight of pleading with God when the heart casts forth mighty jets of supplication like a geyser in full action! How mighty is supplication when the whole soul becomes one living, hungering, expecting desire!

But some Christian people often feel as if they could not pray. They get into a condition in which they are not able to pray and that is a very sad state for any child of God to be in. How much do I personally desire to always possess the true spirit of prayer! When I was at Mr. Rowland Hill’s house at Wotton-Under-Edge, many years ago, I asked, “Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?” And the answer of someone who had known him when he was there, was, “He used to pray everywhere.” I said, “Yes, but did he not have a special place for prayer?” The reply was, “I do not know. I never saw him when he was not praying.” “Well, but,” I asked, “did he not study somewhere?” I was told that he was always studying, wherever he went, yet that he was always in the spirit of prayer. The good old man, at last, had got into such a blessed state of mind that when he sat down on the sofa, he would be going over a familiar hymn, and when he walked in the garden, he would be to-tooting something

gracious! You know how they found him, in George Clayton's chapel over yonder. His carriage had not come, after the service, and he was walking up and down the aisles, softly singing to himself—

***“And when I'm to die, 'Receive me,' I'll cry,
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why.
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He'll not be in Glory and leave me behind!”***

Good old Soul! He had got to find it in his heart to pray always. He used to wander down the Blackfriars Road with his hands under his coattails and stop to look in very nearly every shop-window, but, all the while, he was talking with God just as much as any man could have done who had shut himself up in a cloister! This is a blessed state of mind to be in—to find as many prayers in your soul as there are hairs on your head—to pray as often as the clock ticks—to wake up in the night and feel that you have been dreaming prayers! And when you rise in the morning, to find that your first thought is either that of praising God for His many mercies, or else pleading for somebody or other who needs your prayers!

How are you to get into this state? Well, I cannot tell you, except this—live near to God. If you live near to God, you must pray. He that learns how to live near to God will learn how to pray and to give thanks to God. Look into your hearts, also, as David did. You cannot find prayer there if you do not look for it. Think much of your own needs, for a realization of how many and how great they are will make you pray. When you see the falls of others, recollect that you also will fall unless God holds you up—so make that a reason and subject for prayer. When you see others who are slack in devotion, or who have become cold in heart, remember you will be as they are if Grace does not prevent. So, let your own needs drive you to prayer.

Then read the Scriptures very much. Study them—suck the sweetness out of them, for they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. You cannot fail to be much in prayer if you spend much time in the reading of the Word. If you will let God speak to you, I am sure you will be compelled to speak with God. Dwell much upon the Doctrines of the Gospel. Seek to understand them. Live upon them and upon the promises, too. If a man were to give me a check, I do not think I should be so foolish as not to cash it. And if God gives me a promise, which is better than any man's check, the most natural thing is for me to go on my knees to Heaven's bank to seek to have it changed—to get the blessing God really promised He would give me! So, keep hard by the promises, and still closer to the faithful Promiser! Live *to* God. Live *for* God. Live *in* God and you will find prayers come out of your soul as sparks come out of the chimney of the blacksmith's smithy! If there is a blazing fire within and the bellows blowing it up and the smith is hard at work in his calling, the sparks will fly. And in this cold weather, dear Brothers and Sisters, it is necessary to keep our hearts warm.

Have you noticed thatched cottages and other houses where the snow lies on the roof? You say, “Yes.” But have you noticed where there is a good fire in the house, anywhere near the roof, how soon the snow is melted? And if you want to get warm and stay warm in the midst of a

cold, graceless world that chills the very marrow in a Believer's bones, keep a warm heart inside, for that will tend to make it warm outside, too! God grant you this blessing and keep you ever abounding in prayer—and He shall have all the praise.

I do trust that some who never prayed before, will try to pray. Nobody ever sneers at prayer but the man who does not pray. And nobody ever denies its efficacy but the man who knows nothing at all about it. And such men are out of court and have no right to speak upon this matter. But men who are honest in other things and who would be believed in a court of law, should be believed when they bear their solemn testimony that times without number God has heard their prayers! Try it, Friend. God help you to try it! Especially begin by believing in Jesus and then shall you rightly seek unto the Almighty and He will be found of you. Yes, you shall lift up your eyes to Heaven and the Lord will look down upon you and accept you, and bless you, both now and forever! So may it be, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 7:18-29; LUKE 18:1-14.**

2 Samuel 7:18. *Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD.* David desired to build a temple for God and the Prophet Nathan, conceiving that such a design must be acceptable to the Most High, told the king to proceed with it. But God's mind was otherwise and Nathan had to tell David that it was well that it was in his heart, but that God intended the temple to be built, not by him, but by his son Solomon. However, the Lord gave to David very large promises and when he had received them, through Nathan, he was so overcome with gratitude that he went in and "sat before the Lord." That was his posture in prayer on this occasion. Good men have been known to pray kneeling, which seems to be the most natural attitude. Some have prayed with their faces between their knees, as Elijah did. Some have prayed standing, as the publican did. Some have prayed sitting, as David did. Probably he was mingling prayer and meditation when he "sat before the Lord."

18. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me here?* How often has a similar feeling leaped into our heart! Why should the Lord have dealt so well with us?—

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

19. *And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; but You have spoken also of Your servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?* No—man could not have been so kind as that! The love of Jesus surpasses the love of women and the love of God surpasses all the kindness of men.

20. *And what can David say more unto You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant.* "What I cannot utter, You can perceive in my heart, though I cannot express it."

21-25. *For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, have You done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. Therefore You are great, O LORD God: for there is none like You, neither is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself, and to make Him a name, and to do for You great things and terrible, for Your land, before Your people, which You redeem to You from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For You have confirmed to Yourself Your people Israel to be a people unto You forever: and You, LORD, have become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as You have said. That is a very short, but exceedingly pithy prayer—"Do as You have said." You do not need any larger promises, Brothers and Sisters, than the Lord has already given you—could He give you any larger ones?—*

"What more can He say than to you He has said, You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

What you have to do is to take the promises He has given and spread them out before the Mercy Seat. And then say to Him, "Do as You have said." What strength there is in this plea! Has He said, and shall He not do it? "Will He break His promise, or shall His right hand fail to perform that which has gone forth from His lips? Far be it from us to think so, but let us say to Him, "Do as You have said." That is the very essence of prayer! Take care not to forget it.

26-29. *And let Your name be magnified forever, saying, The LORD of Hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Your servant David be established before You. For You, O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, have revealed to Your servant, saying, I will build You a house: therefore has Your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto You. And now, O lord GOD, You are that God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness unto Your servant: therefore now let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. You see how he clings to God's promise—"You have promised this goodness unto Your servant." If you get a promise from the Lord and cling to it as You wrestle with the angel, You will surely prevail. You will win the blessing if you can plead, as David did, "You have promised this goodness unto Your servant."*

29. *For You, O lord GOD, have spoken it. How he dwells on it!*

29. *And with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever. Now let us read two of our Lord's parables concerning prayer.*

Luke 18:1-8. *And He spoke a parable unto them to this end that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge His own elect,*

which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell You that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? The whole force of this parable goes to show the prevalence of *importunity*. If You cannot get your desire of God the first time, go again and, if necessary, go again seven times. Yes, if need be, in submission to His will, go seventy times seven! I am afraid there is no fear of our having to be asked the question, “Will you, also, weary my God?” Oh, no, we do not pray enough for that, neither are we so importunate as this poor widow was! Let us prove the power of importunate prayer and rest assured that Heaven’s gate must open if we do but know how to knock and that the blessing must be given if we do but continue to ask for it, for praying breath is never spent in vain.

9-11. *And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. And he drew up his skirts and got upwind, for fear lest any breath that should blow from the publican should defile his sanctified person!*

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* It was not a prayer at all, as you perceive. It was a thanksgiving, but the thanksgiving was merely a veil for self-adulation!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off.* Not daring to come near to the inner shrine—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* I do not suppose that he thought he had really prayed. He scarcely dared to call it prayer. Perhaps, as he went home, he said, “I went up to the temple to pray, but I was so bowed down with a sense of my guilt that I could not pray.” But that was not our Lord’s verdict!

14. *I tell You, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—992, 996, 229.

—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.**

AN EXHORTATION BY REV. C.H. SPURGEON NO. 450

**AND A SALUTATION BY
REV. MERLE D'AUBIGNE, OF GENEVA
DELIVERED IN THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE,
ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1862.**

*“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel. And they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.”
2 Samuel 11:1.*

THE last sentence informs us of a circumstance so significant that the Holy Spirit has recorded it twice. In the parallel passage in the Chronicles, you will find a repetition of the statement that, “David tarried at Jerusalem.” It had, up to now, been his custom to march at the head of his troops. The king of Israel was the commander-in-chief of the Lord’s hosts, and by personal deeds of prowess excited the national spirit. But on this occasion, you perceive, he delegates his power to Joab and seeks inglorious ease.

We are informed that the season had arrived when kings go forth to battle—probably the spring, when horses could be maintained by forage and when, if a long siege should be necessary, the armies might sit down before a city with the prospect of advancing summer and ripening harvests. It was a great occasion. For otherwise, how is it that he sent all Israel with Joab? A great war had been provoked and most important interests were at stake. This makes it the less excusable on the part of the king, that he should, when his presence was especially necessary, absent himself from his proper post.

Nor do we think that State affairs needed his presence in Jerusalem. No rebellions were hatching. The whole land was quiet and all the tribes voluntarily submitted themselves to his sway. It does not seem, from the context, that David was at all occupied with State cares. For you find that he rises from his bed at eventide. Contrary to the hardier custom to which he had accustomed himself in his earlier days, after his noontide meal he laid himself down and slept till the sun was setting. And when he arose, it was not to succor the poor, or to dispense justice, but to take a stroll on the housetop.

And then, being idle, having put his armor off, the arrow smote him—having nothing good to do, the enemy found his awful work. For the Tempter planted straight before his eyes a fair temptation, into which he rushed as a bird to the snare, or as a bullock to the slaughter. Happy would it have been for king David had he been in battle. He would not then have known this temptation. Probably if the temptation had presented itself, he would have been so occupied with martial cares that he would not have fallen a victim.

Idleness was the mother of the mischief and if you trace it to its source, the foul iniquity that has made the name of David a special mark for all

the Lord's enemies, you will find it had much to do with his not going out to battle when the country required it—when the season commanded it and when no affairs of State justified his absence.

You will readily perceive the subject of my address. First, *to the individual Christian*. And secondly, *to the Church*, as God shall help me. I will utter warnings against that deadly lethargy which is so apt to steal over us, putting us into a position to be readily assailable by temptation, yes, and to be easily overcome by it, too.

I. To you, BROTHER IN CHRIST, I SPEAK PERSONALLY.

1. Let me direct your special attention to the season at which this temptation to idleness came upon David. Brethren, David never refused to go forth to battle while he was harassed by his adversary Saul. So long as he is hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, David's character is spotless and his zeal is unrivalled. In his religion there was an intensity of energy, so long as in his life there was an intensity of adversity.

But now an hour of trial is at hand, Saul is dead and the last of his race sits as a humble pensioner at David's table. The son of Jesse is no more obliged to frequent the tracks of the wild goats, or to hide himself among the glooms of Engedi. His great adversary has long ago fallen by the arrows of the Philistines upon the mountains of Gilboa. But a stealthier foe is lurking in ambush—woe to you, David, if he overcomes you!

Ah, Christian, it is a dangerous time to you when temptation has ceased to harass you, when Satan has left you in peace, and when you have placed your foot on your adversary's neck. When the storm has hushed itself to sleep, when a dead calm takes the place of the awful hurricane, it is then you have need to look well to it, for then your soul may lose its former strength and watchfulness and you may decline into indifference and Laodicean lukewarmness. While the devil assails you on the right hand and on the left, you will hardly be able to rest upon the couch of carnal security.

The dog of Hell, by barking in your ears, keeps you awake. But when he shall cease his howling, your eyelids will grow heavy, unless Divine Grace prevents it. When you are no more driven to your knees by furious assaults from Hell, you may experience the still more terrible trials of the enchanted ground and you will have good cause to cry out, "Lord let me not sleep as do others, but let me watch and be sober." Yet again, David at this time had obtained the crown and it was sitting softly and securely upon his head.

Dear Friends, far from depreciating the full assurance of faith, we know that it is our strength and our joy. But there is a temptation connected with it. The Christian is apt to say, "Now I am saved, I have no doubt about it. For the crown of my salvation encircles my head right royally." Believer, be on your watchtower, for the next temptation will be, "Soul, take your ease. The work is done. You have attained. Now fold your arms and sit still. All will end well, why do you need to vex yourself?" Take care of the seasons when you have no doubts." "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

"I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong—you did hide Your face and I was troubled." Bless God for full assurance. But, remember, nothing but careful walking can preserve it. Full assurance is a priceless pearl. But when a man has a precious jewel, and he walks the streets, he ought to be much afraid of

pickpockets. When the Christian has full assurance let him be assured that all the devils in Hell will try to rob him of it. Let him be more upon his watchtower than he was before. This is the temptation of assured Believers—to sit down upon the throne and say—“I shall I sit in my glory forever and see no sorrow. I need no more go forth to fight the Lord’s battles.”

Yet further—it appears that at this time David was at the height of his prosperity. He had attained to about fifty years of age. The year of his jubilee was come and everything went on jubilantly. Wherever he turned his hand, he prospered. “Moab is my wash pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.” He could boast exceedingly, for God was with him in all his ways. Ah, dear Friends, when a Christian prospers, it is an ill time for him, unless he is on his watchtower.

“In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us.” When a man is poor, when he is sick, when he is tried in his estate, he has need of Divine Grace. But when he is rich, when his business succeeds and he and his family are in good health and all is well, he has need of Grace upon Grace. It is hard standing in high places. The brain grows dizzy with looking down. It is not easy to carry a full cup with a steady hand. Smooth places are slippery places. Let us beware, lest when we get full, Jeshurun waxes fat and kicks against the Lord.

Summer weather breeds flies. Fair weather in the soul brings out the evils and mischiefs of our nature. Heat hatches the cockatrice eggs and the heat of prosperity often brings out the young serpents of sin. See to it, lest, like David, you refuse to go forth to battle because you are prospering in the world.

To complete the tragedy, David had now the opportunity of indulging himself in all the luxuries of life. He had a palace with all the accompaniments of oriental magnificence. He was no more the humble shepherd eating a crust from his wallet—no more the chieftain of an outlawed clan, depending upon such churlish husbandmen as Nabal for temporary assistance. The fat of the land was his, the vintage of Ephraim, the corn of Judah, and the dainties brought from afar, from Tyre and Sidon—all were his.

He could be clothed in scarlet and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day—then it was that his *soul* grew lean, while the flesh was pampered. Fat steeds sometimes will not work. Birds too well fed refuse to sing. And so does it happen when the riches of the earth are ours freely to enjoy, and the blessings of Divine Providence are poured out of the cornucopia of Divine munificence, that we refuse to do the Lord’s work, and, like David, go not out to battle.

Dear Friends, I *know* that my sermon is pertinent to some of you. I would that I could portray the individuals so clearly that they could not allot to others the rebuke intended for themselves. It is a well known fact that when some people get rich in gold they grow poor in grace. They rise in the eyes of the world and sink in the esteem of their heavenly Lord. Things which Believers were glad to undertake when they were little in Israel, they cannot look upon when they have grown great among the inhabitants of Zion. Certain folks, when they can keep a carriage, are ashamed to frequent the meeting house. They must go to some more respectable place of worship.

The Truth of God was respectable enough for them when they loved it—but now they love the honor of men more than Christ. They can hood-wink their consciences and unite with worldly Churches, who love architecture, scholarship and pomp, more than the Truth of God and holiness. “God grant,” said one of Wesley’s followers, “that the Methodists may never grow rich.” And I think I might well say, God grant the Baptists never may. O Lord, give them neither poverty nor riches but especially let them not grow too respectable to associate with the poor of the land!

Why, there are some of you who, when you joined this Church, were as earnest as you could be—and where are you now? There are some that were prominent in the prayer meeting—how often do we see them now? Are there not many among us as miserly towards the Lord’s cause as if they did not care a rush for it? You will say I am personal. Brethren, I mean to be and want to be. And if you feel that this is your case, instead of being offended at the honest rebuke now offered to you, solemnly thank God that it comes home to you!

Earnestly retrace your steps, be no more sluggish and sleepy but for the sake of Him who loves you with an everlasting love, once more cast your souls into His cause and go forth to fight your Lord’s battles. Away with your downy dozing and comfortable slumbers. Lord, arouse us by a thunderbolt from Heaven! When Christians have learned the doctrine but begin to forget the practice, when they have a little smattering of experience and think they are *the* men and wisdom shall die with them—when they despise the broken-hearted and timid—there is but a step between them and a fall.

Oh, you who are in such a condition, I solemnly warn you. I sound this day an alarm in Zion. Arise! Arise, you slumberers upon your soft couches, for if you slumber now, you shall one day awake and find yourselves upon the verge of destruction and only the Sovereign Grace of God shall bring you back as David was brought back, and restore you once again to the right way, to journey with broken bones to your tomb, sorrowing because of your sin.

2. Observe, my Brethren, that there are certain tendencies abroad which will co-operate with the dangers of the occasion, and unless the Christian is very watchful, will lead him into David’s vice of slothfulness. Brethren, what would the flesh do with some of us but make us, if we would let it have its way, as idle as Solomon’s sluggard? I do confess, there is, perhaps, no man living that has a stronger temptation to sheer idleness than myself, although I am no boaster when I say I labor as hard as any man in either hemisphere.

Alas, for this body of sin and death, it is hard for a man to serve the Lord aright while imprisoned in it. Brethren, you will find that not only the mere flesh, but the lusting of the mind will naturally lead you to be cold in Christ’s work. Enthusiasm is not the tendency of Englishmen in matters of religion. Only the Spirit of God can give the tongue of fire, and the rushing mighty wind to the assembled disciples. The flesh lusts continually towards inaction. The inertia of matter reaches its height in the corruption of humanity.

We lift up our souls unto God but we fall down again to the earth, for our nature has in it more of the sinking of a millstone than the mounting of an eagle. Well does Watts put it—

“Look, how we grovel here below, fond of these trifling toys—

Our souls can neither fly nor go to reach eternal joys."

Brethren, your unmortified flesh will make you idle enough, without any other tempter.

Then there is Satan. He will take care to sing your lullaby and rock your cradle if you want to sleep, for he loves not to see God's warriors on the alert. While they are all asleep, he knows the war will not go on very briskly. An army dosed with chloroform would be quite as useless as if they were chained and manacled. While swords sleep in scabbards, no foe needs dread them. Ah, my fellow Soldiers, this is a great artifice of Satan, and one of his craftiest devices to lull us all into a deep sleep.

Besides, you will find the world has a great tendency to make you cold and dead. What do you feel, Brethren, after some few hours of intermeddling with business? Is not this vain world a foe to Divine Grace? Unless you are very spiritually minded, do you not find that the world has a down-dragging tendency? I ask the workers, the merchants, the thinkers—do you not find that secular occupations, unless you are exceedingly careful in consecrating them to God—have a tendency to stain the garments of your priesthood and bring you down from your high standing?

The world is to the Christian an ice house and he a tender plant that has been the gardener's special care. I would give nothing for that Christian who loves to be in worldly company. I think if any man can find himself quite at home with ungodly persons, he must be one of them. And if even with merely moral persons he can find a settled rest, surely there can be nothing of the high and aspiring nature within him that belongs to the true-born heir of Heaven.

But, Brethren, I am sorry to have to add one more thing. Even association with some portions of the Church of God, in its present state, may cool the ardor of piety. Ecclesiastical lethargy is perhaps one of the greatest stumbling blocks to young Believers. I am not staggered by the world's indifference to religion, for I can understand it—but the indifference of the Church to the progress of Jesus' kingdom is an enigma which one cannot solve. Many a young enthusiastic Christian has had the noble spirit of Christ all but crushed out of him by seeing the dullness and deadness of older saints, who seemed to be pillars in the temple of God.

Oh, have we not heard our young Davids saying concerning our foes, "Who is this Philistine? I will go against him and smite off his head"? But a veteran Eliab in the Church has said, "Because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart is why you have come to see the battle." When he is brought before a Saul-like minister, he says, "Well, young man, you are enthusiastic, you must not attempt to do the Lord's work by simple faith, you must put this helmet on and carry this spear, you must wear this leg armor of brass."

And the poor young man, with almost enthusiasm enough in him to melt the armor off his back, has to go out to sure defeat, wearing untried weapons which prove his ruin. Oh, give us back the glorious days when the Church was a pillar of fire and when every new member was a new coal added to the glowing mass! Give us back even the stakes of Smithfield, if we might have the fiery energy of the first Reformers! Visit us anew with persecution, if we can but renew the diligent prosecution of the ends and aims of the Church of Christ! Let our foes grow angry if *we* may but grow zealous.

3. To pass on rapidly to the third point. What happened through David's tarrying at home? Some men think it a small thing to be doing nothing for Christ. It is a great thing and will be a *damnable* thing, unless God gives you repentance. What happened, I say, to David? Why, now that he was tarrying at home and giving himself up to sloth, he was losing his usefulness and honor by no more fighting the Lord's battles. No more triumphs were being written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. And even Joab had to send for him to come in at the end of the fray to take the city, lest it should be called by Joab's name.

Is it a little thing for a follower of Christ to be losing the immortal honor of serving the Lord? What will not men do to win fame? And shall we, when it lies at our doors, turn aside to our beds of ease and cast our glory to the grooms? Let us be up and doing—for it is no light thing for a faithful servant of Christ to be losing the honor of serving his Master.

David lost his communion and joy. A man cannot be idle and yet have Christ's sweet company. Christ is a quick walker and when His people would talk with Him they must travel quickly, too, or else they will soon lose His company. Christ, my Master, *goes about doing good* and if you would walk with Him you must go about upon the same mission. The Almighty lover of the souls of men is not likely to keep company with idle persons. I find in Scripture that most of the great appearances that were made to eminent saints were made when they were busy.

Moses kept his father's flock when he saw the burning bush. Joshua is going round about the city of Jericho when he meets the Angel of the Lord. Jacob is in prayer and the Angel of God appears to him. Gideon is threshing and Elisha is plowing, when the Lord calls them. Matthew is in the receipt of customs when he is bid to follow Jesus—James and John are fishing. The manna which the children of Israel kept till morning bred worms and stank—idle grace would soon become active corruption.

Moreover, sloth hardens the conscience—laziness is one of the irons with which the heart is seared. Abimelech hired vain and light persons to serve his turn, and the Prince of Darkness does the same. Oh, Friends, it is a sad thing to rust the edge off from one's mind and to lose keenness of moral perception! But sloth will surely do this for us. David felt the emasculating power of sloth. He was losing the force of his conscience and was ready for anything. The worst is near at hand.

He walks upon the housetop and sees the object which excites his lust. He sends for the woman, the deed is done. It leads to another crime, he tempts Uriah. It leads to murder—Uriah is put to death. And he takes Uriah's wife. Ah, David! Ah, David! How are the mighty fallen! How is the Prince of Israel fallen and become like the lewd fellows who riot in the evening! From this day forth his sunshine turns to clouds, his peace gives place to suffering, and he goes to his grave an afflicted and troubled man, who, though he could say, "God has made with me an Everlasting Covenant," yet had to precede it with that very significant sentence, "Although my house is not so with God."

Dear Friends, is there anyone here among the Lord's people who would crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame? Is there anyone among you that would wish to sell your Master, as Judas did, or turn aside from Christ with Demas? It is easy to do. Oh, you say, you could not do it. *Now*, perhaps you could not. Get slothful. Do not fight the Lord's battles—and it will become not only easy for you to sin, but you will surely

become its *victim*. Oh, how Satan delights to make God's people fall into sin! For then he does, as it were, thrust another nail into the bloody hand of Christ.

Then he does stain the fair white linen of Christ's own garment. Then he vaunts himself that he has gotten a victory over the Lord Jesus and has led one of the Master's favorites captive at his will! Oh, if we would not thus make Hell ring with Satanic laughter and make the men of God weep because the cedars of Lebanon are cut down, let us watch unto prayer and be diligent in our Master's business, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

My dear Friends, we do not exhort you to serve Christ, to be *saved* by it. David *was* saved. I only speak to you who *are* saved, and I beg and beseech you to take notice of David's fall—and of the sloth that was at the beginning of it—as a warning to yourselves. Some temptations come to the industrious but *all* temptations attack the idle. Notice the invention used by country people to catch wasps. They will put a little sweet liquor into a long and narrow-necked phial. The do-nothing wasp comes by, smells the sweet liquor, plunges in and is drowned.

But the bee comes by, and if she does stop for a moment to smell, yet she enters not, because she has honey of her own to make. She is too busy in the work of the commonwealth to indulge herself with the tempting sweets. Master Greenham, a Puritan Divine, was once waited upon by a woman who was greatly tempted. Upon making enquiries into her way of life, he found she had little to do, and Greenham said, "That is the secret of your being so much tempted. Sister, if you are very busy, Satan may tempt you, but he will not easily prevail, and he will soon give up the attempt."

Idle Christians are not tempted of the devil so much as they do tempt the devil to tempt them. Idleness sets the door of the heart ajar and asks Satan to come in. But if we are occupied from morning till night, if Satan shall get in, he must break through the door. Under Sovereign Grace and next to faith, there is no better shield against temptation than being, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." And, dear Friends, let me remind those of you who are doing little for Christ, that once you were not so cold as this.

There was a time with David when the sound of the clarion of war would have stirred his blood and he would have been eager for the fray. There was a day when the very sight of Israel marshaled in goodly phalanx would have made David bold as a lion. Oh, it is an ill thing to see the lion changed like this! God's hero stays at home with the women! There was a time when *you* would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon and never minded standing in the aisles. But now the sermons are tedious to some of you, although you have soft cushions to sit upon.

Then if there was a cottage meeting, or a street preaching, you were there. "Ah," you say, "that was wildfire." Blessed wildfire! The Lord give you the wildfire back again. For even if it *is* wildfire, better wildfire than no fire at all—better be called a fanatic than deserve to be called a drone in Christ's hive. Those of you who do very little for your Master—and there are a few such in this Church, who grudge to give of their substance—let me say to you, Are you not ashamed to see how the Lord's other servants serve Him? When Uriah said to David, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents. And my lord Joab and the servants of my lord, are en-

camped in the open fields. Shall I then go into my house, to eat and to drink? As you live and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.” When he said that, methinks the king must have felt very uneasy in his luxurious sloth.

What do you say to this, some of you? You, who were once the chief of sinners, are now saved by Divine Grace. You have had high privileges, great tastes of love, near fellowship with Him—you are His own elect, anointed, taken up from the dunghill and made to sit among princes! And yet you are doing next to nothing for Christ. Oh, dear Friends, I would not so much bid you to think over these things, as beseech the Holy Spirit to lay these matters to your hearts—that you may not sleep any longer—but being of the day, may do the day’s work, till the day shall end!

II. I shall occupy but a few minutes more, while I endeavor to speak of the text as it refers to THE WHOLE CHURCH. For I think it has a loud voice to the whole of us as a community. Strangers and members of other Churches must kindly forget that they are here. I am not about to speak to them but I am about to speak to *you*—the two thousand members of this Church under my care, to whom I am bound most of all to speak personally and faithfully.

My dear Friends, it does seem to me that to us as a Church the temptation to sloth is very likely to come, for we are very much in the same condition as David. Our enemies do not harass us so much as they once did. When the Parliament is over, we shall have certain newspapers abusing us again, for when they have nothing else to say, they fill up with abusing us. But there was a time when we had no friends. We look back some eight years ago, when the Church of Christ was very shy of us—we were innovators, preaching in those wicked music halls.

It was such a very awful thing to preach the Gospel where people would come to hear it! It was going contrary to the customs of the Christian Church to carry the Gospel to poor sinners. And good people, holy people, and godly people, thought we were sinners above all sinners on earth. And if an accident did occur, if the tower of Siloam fell, how plainly were we told that we deserved the catastrophe. Then there were sneers everywhere, caricatures, jeers, jibes of all sorts—and you all had to suffer, each your share, with your leader.

To a great extent that is over. The clergy of the Church of England do now what it was once infamous for us to do. Now the theater hears the voice of Christ. Now the cathedrals echo with the holy hymn—blessed be God for all this! We enjoy a degree of peacefulness and have not now all the world against us, as once we had. Now we shall be tempted to fold our arms and say, Let us subside into the easy respectability of other congregations and let it be well with us.

During all the time God has been pleased to favor us with profound peace in the Church. We have been disturbed by no word of ill-doctrine, by no uprising of heretics in our midst, or any separations or divisions. This is a blessed thing—but still Satan may make it a dangerous matter. We may begin to think that there is no need for us to watch, that we shall always be as we are. And deacons and elders, and pastor and Church members, may all cease their vigilance—and then the root of bitterness may spring up in the neglected corner till it gets too deeply rooted for us to tear it up again.

We have accomplished, as a Church, and by God's Divine Grace, the great work which we set for ourselves—the building of this House of Prayer. And now we come to our place in our loved House of Prayer and feel the Master's presence with us. But without a grand object before our eyes imperatively demanding self-sacrifice from each one of us, as this object did—without some enterprise which we can all lay hold of and feel that we could give our last shilling to carry it out successfully—we are apt to grow rusty.

We will be tempted to lean upon our weapons instead of using them, and to withdraw from the Lord's host instead of rushing on to battle with the shout of men who mean to win the victory. Ah, give us back again all the noise and the confusion and the strife! Let us have once more the coldness and the harshness and evil speaking of the entire Church of God, if we may but have our early enthusiasm and earnestness for Christ. Our work of educating men for the ministry may supply the object for our zeal—may the Lord give zeal for the object!

Dear Friends, let me say solemnly, there are many tendencies to make this Church sleep. We come frequently into contact with professed Believers who will throw cold water upon every effort—who think doing anything for Christ a work of supererogation. And there is a tendency in us to go with them and to say, "Let it be so. Let us be quiet." It is almost necessary for the Church that, at least once in a hundred years, there should arise in it some new body of enthusiasts. For the old Churches, though noble at the start, like all human things, flag before long.

Why, Methodism, though still most powerful, has nothing like the fire it had in Wesley's and Whitfield's time. It is now no more like a great volcano sending up torrents of holy fire to Heaven in prayer and sending down streams of all-consuming lava into the plains of sin. It has grown respectable and learned and fine. So with each of the Churches. Do they not all degenerate? No matter whether it is England, America, France, Switzerland—wherever it may be, there is a down-drawing tendency constantly at work. And unless God the Holy Spirit comes in with irresistible might, *we* shall as a Church succumb to general lethargy and yield ourselves to apathy.

What shall we do, as a Church, then? Let us take heed to our footsteps, everyone of us, and be doubly careful—let us meet together in greater numbers for prayer. Let each man feel more and more his individual responsibility to Christ. Let us weigh the awful necessities of this huge city. Let us put out every energy and use every agency that can possibly be employed for the regeneration of this dark, dark land.

If we grow idle. If the Church of Christ universally shall grow idle, we cannot expect that our enemies will be idle, too. Once the Light said to the Darkness, "I am growing weary with shooting my arrows every morning at you, O Darkness! I am weary with pursuing you around the globe continually. I will retire, if you will." But the Darkness said, "No, it is of necessity that if you yield your dominion I shall take it. There can be no truce between you and me."

Friends, I might address the members of this Church as it is said an old Scotch Commander once addressed his soldiers when he saw the enemy coming. This was his brief, terse speech—"Lads," said he, "there they are, and if you dinna kill them they will kill you." Look, members of the Church. If you do not put down lethargy and sloth, if you strive not

against Popery, infidelity and Sin, they will put you down. There is no other alternative. To conquer or to die. To live and to be glorious. Or to fall ignobly.

Look! Jehovah lifts His banner before our eyes today! Rally! Rally! Rally, you soldiers of the Cross! The trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long today. And the Hell drum on the other side sounds, too. Who dares to hesitate? Let him be accursed. "Curse you, Meroz, curse you, Meroz," says the Lord, "curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, if they come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. He that is not with Me is against Me. He that gathers not with Me scatters abroad."

Away with you, you indifferent ones! Know you not you are either on Christ's side or else you are His adversaries? On! The charge comes—forward, heroes of Heaven! What shall become of those who are midway between the two armies? Over you, over you—troops shall trample on your bodies! You shall be the first to be cut in pieces—O you indifferent ones—who are neither this nor that! And then shall come the shock and then the charge. And as in that conflict you shall have no portion, so in that great triumph which shall surely follow, you shall have no share.

I will give way to my friend, Mr. D'Aubigne, who will address you for a few minutes, when I have simply reminded those who are not in Christ's army, that with them there is something to come before service, "Except you repent and are converted, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven." The door to that kingdom is Christ—trust Him and you are saved. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house."

My dear Friend, Dr. D'Aubigne, is here this morning, having been called by the Bishop of London, according to the order of our Beloved Queen, to preach in the Royal Chapel of St. James. In a kind note with which he favored me last week, he expressed a desire publicly to show his hearty fellowship with his Brethren of the Free Churches of England and I am delighted to welcome him in the Tabernacle this morning—in the name of this Church, and I may venture to add, in the name of all the *Free Churches of England*. May the Historian of the Reformation continue to be honored of the Lord his God!

DR. MERLE D'AUBIGNE—I do not speak your tongue, my dear Friends—I speak it very badly but I will do what I can to make myself understood. When I heard your dear pastor reading to us the 16th chapter of the Romans, I remembered those words which we find very often in the Epistles of Paul—"Love to the saints," and "Faith in the Lord." In the 16th chapter we find a beautiful exhibition of the love to the saints, the children of God.

We see it was written from the Church of Corinth, in Greece, to the Church of Rome. Observe how many Christians that Church of Corinth and the Apostle knew at Rome! We have a long catalog of names—Priscilla, Aquila, Andronicus and others. I must confess, my dear Friends, to my shame, that in this great assembly I know only two or three names. I know the name of our dear Friend, Mr. Spurgeon. I know the name but not the person, of Mr. North, upon my left, and I know the name of the friend who has received me in your great city, Mr. Kinnaird, "Gaius, my host," as the Apostle says.

But in this great assembly of six thousand men and women and I hope Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I do not know another name. Well, my dear Friends, I would ask you, do you know the names of many Christians in Geneva? You do not know perhaps three, perhaps two, perhaps one. Now, that is to me a demonstration that fraternity, or brotherly love, is not so intense in our time as it was in the time of the Apostles. In the first century, for a man to give his name to the Lord was to expose himself to martyrdom.

And Christians in that time formed only one household in the whole world, in Europe, Asia and Africa. Let us remember that, and may we, by the Holy Spirit, say that we who have been baptized with the blood and the Spirit of the Lord, have only one Father, one Savior, one Spirit, one faith—and we are only one house, the house of the living God, the house of Christ, one house of the Holy Spirit in the whole world. Not only in Europe, Asia, and Africa, but in America, in Australia, one house, one family. Oh, my dear Brethren, let us grow in the love to the Brethren!

Then there is another thing, faith—faith in the Lord Jesus. There can be no love to the saved and the redeemed, if there is no true living faith and hope in the Savior and the Redeemer. Well, I suppose all of you in this great meeting would say, “We believe in the Lord, we have faith in Him.” Yes, but that faith must be sincere, must be living, must come from the heart. I will tell you one word from Rome. Probably all these friends sent some words to the Apostle, but I will tell you one word that was said once in Rome, not at the time of Paul but at the time of our blessed Reformation.

There was in the latter part of the sixteenth century, a man in Italy, who was a child of God, taught by the Spirit. His name was Aonio Paleario. He had written a book called, “The Benefit of Christ’s Death.” That book was destroyed in Italy, and for three centuries it was not possible to find a copy. But two or three years ago, an Italian copy was found, I believe, in one of your libraries at Cambridge or Oxford and it has been printed again. It is perhaps singular, but this man did not, as he ought to have done, leave the Romish Church. But his whole heart was given to Christ.

He was brought before the judge in Rome by order of the pope. The judge said, “We will put to him three questions. We will ask him what is the first cause of salvation, then what is the second cause of salvation, then what is the third cause of salvation.” They thought that in putting these three questions, he would at last be made to say something which should be to the glory of the Church of Rome. They asked him, “What is the first cause of salvation?” And he answered, “*Christ.*” They then asked him, “What is the second cause of salvation?” And he answered, “CHRIST.”

And they asked him the third time, “What is the third cause of salvation?” and he answered, “CHRIST.” They thought he would have said, first, Christ. Secondly, the Word. Thirdly, the Church. But no, he said, “Christ.” The first cause, Christ. The second, Christ. The third, Christ. And for that confession which he made in Rome, he was condemned to be put to death as a martyr. My dear Friends, let us think and speak like that man. Let everyone of us say, “The first cause of my salvation is Christ. The second is Christ. The third is Christ. Christ and His atoning

blood, Christ and His powerful regenerating Spirit, Christ and His eternal electing Grace, Christ is my only salvation, I know of nothing else.”

Dear Friends, we find in the Epistle to the Romans these words—“The whole Church salutes you.” I have no official charge but I may in a Christian and fraternal spirit say to you, the Geneva Church, the Church in Geneva salutes you. And I would say, the whole Continental Church salutes you, for we know you, and we love you and the dear minister God has given you. Now we ask from you love towards us. We do what we can in that dark Continent to bring forward the light of Jesus Christ.

In Geneva we have an Evangelical Society which has that work before it and in other places we are also laboring. We ask for our work an interest in your prayers, for the work is hard among the Roman Catholics and the infidels of the Continent. But as our Brother, in the beginning of the service, reminded you—from the little town of Geneva light came, by the Grace of the Spirit, to many nations and especially to England and Scotland, by the ministry of John Calvin, our Reformer.

I may mention to you that upon the tri-centenary anniversary of the death of Calvin, which will take place in two years, on the 27th of May, 1864, we desire to erect in Geneva a monument to the blessed Reformation and to the Reformer who has been the instrument of God in promoting the true doctrine, not only in Geneva, but in a great many countries. And I ask also your interest in that work and in that spot which has been blessed since the 16th century, for Switzerland, for France, for the Netherlands, for Germany, for England, for Scotland, and is now blessed for the United States and for the ends of the earth. I beg of you, dear Friends, your deep interest and your earnest prayers for us. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! Amen.

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A SUMMONS TO BATTLE

NO. 895

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The time when kings go forth to battle.”
2 Samuel 11:1.*

THERE seems to have been in the olden times, among the petty sovereigns of the East, regular seasons for warfare. Perhaps they marched forth in the spring, when the grass would afford food for their horses, or possibly in the autumn, when the troops could forage upon the standing crops. These sovereigns of small territories were little better than the captains of hordes of robbers, and their revenues were rather derived from plunder than from legitimate taxation. We may thank God that we live in a happier era, for the miseries of nations were then beyond imagination. Desolating as war now is, its evils are comparatively little compared with those days of perpetual plunder. There are times when kings go forth to battle now—they will be at their accursed trade when they think that their people will tolerate another oppressive tax, or when their credit is good enough for their bankers to make them another advance. Alas, the blood which has been poured forth to gratify the ambition of princes!

Yet is it ever cause for thankfulness that the times when kings go forth to battle are not left altogether to their whim and caprice. There is One who reigns in the highest heavens who suffers not this plague to break forth among the sons of men unless in His wisdom He ordains that good shall come of it. The Lord holds back the dogs of war with a leash and looses them not except when His superior wisdom sees it should be so. But I am not about to talk of kings. Very few of them are good enough to talk of on a Sunday and the most of them are scarcely worth talking of at any time!

I must transfer the text to some other and more practical use. There is a time in our hearts when the inner warfare rages with unusual violence. At certain seasons our corruptions break forth with extreme violence, and if, for awhile, they appear to have formed a truce with us, or to have lost their power, we suddenly find them full of vigor, fierce and terrible—and difficult will be the struggle for us, by prayer and holy watchfulness—to keep ourselves from becoming slaves to our inward enemies. May we have increased Grace given us in these trying seasons

I believe you have, most of you, found that there are seasons when kings go forth to battle in the matter of your doubts and fears. Depressions come upon you, you scarcely know why. They come without apparent cause and they depart almost as unexpectedly. As John Bunyan says

of the Slough of Despond, that at certain seasons it pours forth its mire most horribly, so I have found it with regard to despondency and feebleness of faith. At certain times these tyrants make havoc in our souls. So is it with Satan. He does not always tempt. Though always “going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” he does not always roar. Neither does he, every moment, leap upon his prey. He is always ready to destroy, but does not always find the opportunity for attack.

Yet are there times when he finds our flesh in a fit condition for his temptation, like dry tinder for his sparks, when he finds our souls at a distance from God, our faith at a low ebb and our piety declining—then will this grand enemy of our souls go forth to battle like a mighty Nimrod—seeking to lead us captive and utterly to destroy our faith. You know these times of war, my Brothers and Sisters, for you have passed through them. If they are not upon you just now, thank God and accept the rest which His love affords you, but keep your sword out of its scabbard, for the fight may begin again at any hour.

If you are passing through the conflict at this moment, be not afraid nor discouraged—it has been the lot of all God’s people to fight their way to Heaven and it must be yours, too. Think not that you shall be overcome, but rather cry with the Prophet, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.” Neither, however, are any of these things the topic upon which I am to speak this morning. I thought of using the text in reference to *Christian activities*. There are times when Christians, all of whom are kings unto God, should go forth to battle in a special and peculiar sense. So we will take the text and accommodate it to that end this morning, and may God send us now a soul-stirring word.

I. THE TIME FOR THE KINGS TO GO FORTH TO BATTLE IS COME. The special time for Christian activities is now. In some sense, no, in the *highest* sense, Believers ought to be *always* active. There should never be an idle day, or a wasted hour, or even a barren moment to a servant of God. We are bound as soon as we receive the new birth to let that spiritual life develop itself in zeal for our Lord Jesus Christ who has redeemed us by His blood—and never till we lay aside this body are we to cease from service, or imagine that we have a furlough from the camp of our King!

Yet no man can always work with the same intense activity. I do not believe that God intended that any man should do so—rest is a necessity of feebleness. Look at Nature. How active it is in the spring! How the buds leap into verdure! Observe how active all things are in summer! But Nature begins to relax somewhat of its vigor as autumn bronzes the leaves of the forest, and while in winter, vegetation sleeps and the sap, instead of circulating rapidly through the tree, retires into the center and slumbers for awhile. Yet who shall say that the months of winter are wasted? No, but during the winter months the vegetable world is gathering needed strength for another spring and summer and autumn.

So it is with Christian men at times. They have their winters, when the sap is driven to the center, when the spiritual life exercises itself rather about its own self than about anything outward. A time when the man's care is rather about whether he himself is saved, whether his own spirit is in a flourishing state, than about the souls of others. Well, if the God of Nature has so decreed it, so it must be. As with individuals, so with Churches. I do not believe that any Church can always maintain the very highest pitch of earnestness so that every sermon shall run through the congregation like fire along the prairie. I cannot believe that any company of persons could bear the full force of a revival year after year, for surely the body would slow down, however willing the spirit might be.

And so there will be alternating seasons and every experienced and observing Christian must have noticed these times of rest, as it were, to the Church intermingled with her times when the singing of birds has come and the fig tree puts forth her green figs. I believe that just now we have come to a season suitable for special effort. Every Christian should go forth to battle when there is best hope of success. We should select wisely, as the kings did, the most suitable seasons for warfare. And first, this is a suitable season because the people *can be gathered for religious exercises*. All through the summer months, bright for the world, it is usually dark for the Church. In the country towns the multitude engaged in agricultural occupations cannot be expected to come out to weeknight services, and Prayer Meetings, Bible classes and the like, generally slow down, while the long days demand longer labor.

I do not say it is right that these meetings should slow down so much as they do, but the fact remains that during the summer season there generally is a slowing down of religious interest in the villages and towns. And even among ourselves it is to some extent the same. During the long days, the man who has to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, must work, and it is only when the evenings begin to draw in and the winter months come that the happier seasons in the Church arrive and the winter becomes our summer, as the summer had been our winter. Right on from this period of the year the Church should shake herself and say, "Now our harvest time comes! Now is the period for kings to go forth to battle. God has given us the opportunity, now, and we must avail ourselves of it, lest before another harvest time is past and another spiritual summer time is ended many may be where they can never be saved."

It must be a good time for holy activity just now, also, dear Friends, because in addition to the possibilities of the seasons, it is certain that there is a willingness to hear the Gospel. This house, as often as we enter it, gives us decided proof that the old Gospel of Jesus Christ has not lost its power. I have heard and I have read and I also have believed the criticism, that the preacher who occupies this pulpit wields but slender eloquence and possesses few of the graces of oratory. The power which holds these

vast crowds together, year after year, is the power that held them years ago—the simple Gospel plainly spoken from an earnest heart.

The people are not tired of the Gospel! The people of London are not sick of the old preaching of the Cross. If your ministers would lay aside their oratory—a plague upon it all—and if they would come back to speak in simple terms of the Christ that died and tell men plainly the way of salvation, there is no reason why other houses should not be filled as well as this—for there is a hunger for the Bread of Life—and if men could but hear the simple earnest Gospel, they would press to the place to receive it! When once there is a willingness to hear, and we have the mark and sign of it here today, should not every Christian say within himself, “If men are willing to hear it, they shall not miss it because I am unwilling to tell it. If they are ready to receive, I will be ready to dispense. I will not cease to testify of the way of salvation to those who are anxious to listen to it”? I beseech you, therefore, because evidently there is a readiness in the fish to be taken in the net, to not be slack to cast the net day and by night!

Moreover, the time for kings to go forth to battle will always be *when the king’s troops are fit for battle*. I mean, the time for spiritual work is when the worker is especially fit for it. When is that? Should it not be when he has been fed with spiritual meat? Should it not be when, through that spiritual meat, his faith has grown and his love has increased? If any Christian finds himself in a holy and a happy condition—if he sits under a ministry that is edifying to his own soul—should not that be above all others a time when he should say, “To what purpose is this strength? For what reason has God given me this spiritual meat to sustain my strength? For what, indeed? Ought I to keep it for myself, to lay it by, or to spend it on my pride? No, it cannot be so! It must be given me that I may lay it out in my Master’s use and for the salvation of perishing men.”

Brethren, is it not so this day with many of you? Have you not heard the Gospel with pleasure? Have you not rejoiced in your assured interest in the Gospel? Are you not, at this present moment, in the enjoyment of holy confidence? Is not your heart glad within you at the very sound of Jesus’ name? Oh, now, if never before, surely now you should take your place in the ranks of the Lord of Hosts and go forth to the fight! They were apt, of old, to excuse from the fight the young, the sick, the faint and worn—but they would not excuse the valiant men and such as were strong in Israel. Neither can I excuse my Brothers and Sisters to whom God has been especially gracious, but rather would I sound the trumpet in Zion and say, “It is to you, to you that the summons has come! Awake! Arise! Put on your strength and go forth like kings to the battle.”

Another season of special work should be when *discerning Christian men feel the motions of the Spirit of God calling them to unusual service*. “When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself,” said God to David. And then David *did* bestir himself and the Philistines were struck down! Do you not, some of

you, hear the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees? I think I have heard it. There have come to my soul, lately, whispers in the midst of pain and weariness which seemed to say, "Awake! O man of God, bestir yourself! Your fellow men are perishing! The land is covered with thick darkness. Awake! Reveal the Light that is given you—cease not to shine and burn according as the fire within your heart dictates to you!" Have no such angel whispers come to you?

I shall hail it as a sacred omen, if Sunday school teachers here have been disturbed with thoughts about those who are in their classes still unconverted. If young men here have felt impulses within their spirits to break loose from worldly ties and dedicate themselves to the Master's honor. I shall count it to be one of the auspices of the coming victory if there are among us matrons or maidens, fathers, or youths of younger years who shall have felt in their spirits a Divine throb of pity for the dying multitude and an earnest compassion for the thousands that are going down into the Pit. Surely there are some of us here who can bear witness and say, "Our state of heart has been to us a premonition that it is time for kings to go forth to battle." The time to favor Zion, the set time has come! Let her awake and arise, for God will go before her and give her the victory!

One other mark of the time for kings to go forth to battle is surely *when the Lord Himself works*. We are workers together with God. When we lift our hand to strike sin in His name, the Omnipotent arm strikes, too. If we require anything to guide us as to periods of especial labor, surely it should be when the spirit of God puts forth especial force. Now there are in this house, at this very moment, hearts in which the Spirit of God has been working lately. We are not left without conversions. We have not so many as I could desire, but we have some. There are those convicted of sin among us seeking rest and finding none. There are others who have but lately come to the foot of our dear Lord's Cross and looked up and viewed the flowing of His precious blood and have rested their hearts' salvation alone in Him. God is working—shall not we work?

The presence of good men with us is encouraging, but oh, the Presence of the GOD of good men should much more stimulate us! Mohammed, in one of his first famous battles, stimulated his soldiers to the fight by declaring that he could hear the neighing of the horses of the angels as they rode to the conflict to win the victory for the faithful. We speak not so, but surely the horses of fire and the chariots of fire are round about the faithful servant of God and Faith's discerning eyes can see the God of Providence moving Heaven and earth to help His Church, if His Church will but arise from the dust and put on her beautiful garments and resolves to conquer in her Master's name! I speak it and I believe I speak no other than the truth—a joyful and yet solemn truth—the time for kings to go forth to battle is come!

I am sure that the time for this Church, in particular, has come, for of this I can judge with certainty—the time for effort and success has fully arrived. And as for the Church universal, surely there is no better period for her to set herself to seek a revival than just now, when there is a lull in political excitement—when one great step in progress has been taken—has been so well taken that all uproar concerning it has ceased and the world waits longingly for better days to come. Now is the time, surely, for every saint of God to get to the top of his Carmel and, like Elijah, with his head between his knees, to cry mightily and look towards the sea until he shall see the cloud, though it is but as a man's hand, expecting that in answer to mighty prayer the clouds shall yet pour forth their water and the earth shall be deluged with a shower of Divine Grace!

II. Since the time for battle is come, the second point shall be, **IT BEHOVES EVERY SOLDIER NOW TO GO TO THE WARS**—every professed Christian, every Believer, every saved sinner. I say, it behooves *all* to fight the Lord's battles and I press the point with such considerations as these. *All Believers belong to Christ*—you are His goods and chattel. You are His bond servants. You bear in your bodies His brand, the marks of the Lord Christ, for, “you are not your own, you are bought with a price.”

Now, no Believer here will deny that. You sang just now—

“For I am His and He is mine,”

and it is your highest glory that that is the truth. Now, Beloved, by this fact that you belong to Christ, I charge you do not delay! You have but one talent, you reply—but you belong to Christ whether you have one talent or ten. You are very busy in the world, you say, but you belong to Christ and I beseech you lend not yourselves to a wicked world. You tell me that you have not the moral courage to perform Christian service—but you belong to Christ and anything that prevents your serving Him will become a sin—and therefore you must strive against it till in some form or other you have rendered help in the great crusade now that the Lord's anointed go forth to battle.

More than that, I will add, *all of you Believers love Christ*. Your belonging to Him has worked in you a true affection for Him. Shall I put the question to you, that you may have the pleasure of answering it to your own hearts? “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” You are a Believer in Jesus and you profess to be saved by Him—do you love Him? Oh, were this the time, surely you would rise in one glorious company, you faithful ones, and say, “Love Him? Yes, indeed, He knows our hearts. He knows all things and He knows we love Him.” Prove your love, then! He gives you a fair field for it. You cannot better prove your love to your King than by fighting your King's battles and spreading abroad the savor of His name.

Moreover, *God has appointed each one of you to a service*. You are not all set to preach, nor all to any one form of labor. The hand is not set to do the duty of the foot, nor the foot to accomplish the service of the eye, yet the foot is as necessary as the eye and the eye as the hand. Now, what is

your service? Rest assured nobody can do it but yourself! It will therefore be left undone if you do not attend to it. As in a body, if any one member cease its functions, the body becomes imperfect and the whole of it suffers. So if any one child of God in this Church shall cease from the particular duty allotted to him, no one else can do it and the Church must suffer damage.

It is not for me to point out in every case what your niche may be, but the God who made you what you are appointed, at the same time, for you your place and your service, which, I repeat, none can occupy or discharge but yourself. Arise then, my Brother, my Sister, whoever you may be and ask yourself, "What is there for me to do?" and ask of your Master, "Lord, what would You have me do?" Moreover, let me remind you that *there is strength promised for each of you*. "As your days, so shall your strength be." You must not excuse yourself from the battle because you are weak, for the Lord strengthens the feeble. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

It is not in the strength *you* have that you can serve Him, but in the strength which He will give you as you need it. Here, take the bread and take the fish and feed the thousands! Say not, "It is not enough." He shall multiply both the bread and the fish in the breaking and the consuming and there shall be enough and some to spare. Hear then, you who profess to be in Christ, you who love Him—you all have a work to do—and to each, God will give the needed Grace. Therefore I charge you by your fealty to your King, by your allegiance to your Lord, every one of you shake yourself from the dust of idleness and resolve to go forth, "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Shall I say, Brothers and Sisters, that there is work for all of us to do which lies very close to hand? The preacher will never be without his! God will take care to furnish all His servants with sufficient work. You teachers in the Sunday school, hold to your calling—it is a noble one—you are greatly honored in being permitted to take so distinguished a post of service as that of training young children for Christ. If you can do neither of these, and cannot speak for Christ at all—if you meet with any book, or tract, or sermon, that has been useful to your own soul—scatter it!

I remember to have read in Cotton Mather's book upon plans of usefulness, that he remarks that sometimes at the expense of a shilling, under God's blessing, a soul has been converted. Such books as Alleyne's, "Alarm," Baxter's, "Call to the Unconverted," and Doddridge's, "Rise and Progress," have worked wonders in years gone by! And at this hour you may have, for a penny or less, truths so set forth as to ensure the reader's attention. Mr. Cecil says he had to be very grateful to God for his mother, not so much because she pressed him to read good books, as that she took care to put good books where he was likely to take them up. O you

who love Jesus, attend to this! Place the Truth of God in the way of him who knows it not. Lose no opportunity of so doing.

Talk for Christ personally, if you can, to individuals. Your Master sitting at the well talking to the Samaritan woman was doing no small service to the Truth of God. He preached to all Samaria through that woman! So may you preach to half a town through one individual! O that not one of us here may be idle! If you cannot do anything else, you can *pray* and what strength the Church of God gets from its praying men and women! Many bedridden saints are all the nearer to Heaven in their weakness and by their supplications they act like conductors to the skies, bringing down the Divine lightning from God that shall rive and split the hearts of the ungodly. Oh, if you cannot do anything else, succor us by your intercessions! I hope that there are no idlers in this Church, but if there are, I charge them to cease from sloth! Better for you to occupy the meanest place of service than to be an idle Christian!

I walked, a few days ago, by rows of houses all empty and shut up—and I could not help thinking if the landlords would charge the smallest rent and put in the very poorest tenants, it would be better than to let them stand empty—for the boys had made all the windows targets for their skill in stone throwing. The thieves had taken care to remove every piece of lead and movable metal they could get at and most of the lower rooms had evidently been playrooms for children and dogs and the unsightly place was giving the neighborhood a bad name from which it was not likely to soon recover. Better to have had the worst of tenants than to leave the houses to become ruins.

Some Christians had better take to the meanest occupation than let their souls stand in such a disreputable state as they do, like empty, unoccupied, useless, decaying, dilapidated houses. You cannot be idle without being as much a sufferer yourself as any man besides. Even the sick, the sorrowing, the mournful, the sad, I would gladly summon to the battle! If they do not achieve much for the cause, it will help themselves. One of the readiest ways to arise from the depths of agony is activity. Let a woman who has lost a beloved husband say, “I will from now on do nothing but mourn for my departed husband”—let her seclude herself from society and stand apart from all activities of life—her grief will eat as does a canker and her life will be bitter to her. But let her see to her household. Let her come forth and attend to the necessary business of life, and her heart will receive comfort.

I recollect the story of a mother, who, when her little boy was playing in the room, was shedding many bitter tears for her widowhood. Her little boy, who seemed to know right well the source of the mother’s grief, came up to her and putting his arms around her neck, said, “You have got *me*, Mother,” and you cannot tell how it comforted her heart as she thought, “Yes, and I have a solemn charge in you to train you up to know your father’s God and to follow to the Heaven where you father is at rest.” The

necessary care which she rendered to her little son helped to wipe away the tears which else might long have worn a furrow down her cheeks. There is nothing healthier for the sick, there is nothing more encouraging for the desponding, there is nothing more strengthening for the weak, there is nothing more soul-enriching for the poor in spirit than for every Christian man among us to gird himself to do something for his Lord and Master!

Oh, you do not *know* what you can do! There are immortal and immeasurable capacities within you! If you will but try, God will help you! If you use your little ability, you shall have more! The one talent shall become two, the two four, and the four shall multiply. "To him that has shall be given and he shall have abundance." I charge you, therefore, my beloved Flock, let not a single one of you stay back at this time, when every king should go forth to the battle!

III. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the holy war, THERE ARE GREAT MOTIVES TO EXCITE US TO FIGHT EARNESTLY FOR CHRIST. The motives gather round five points. The first is *our King*. Who would not fight for such a King, Immanuel, God With Us? By the wounds and by the crown of thorns, by the bleeding heart, by the incessant intercession on His Glory Throne, let us lift up our hands, now, and declare that we will not cease to fight for Him! As of old, when sometimes a king asked a pledge of fealty from his assembled knights, they drew their swords and waved them in the air and took a solemn oath to defend his throne—so now, today, let each Believer say within his soul, "I *must*, I *will* contend for such a King as Christ my Lord."

Remember next *the banner* under which we fight—the banner of the Truth of God, of the atoning blood! Let me remind you, Brothers and Sisters, how your fathers held that banner firmly, though they stained it with their gore. Remember how many have borne it amidst the smoke of their own burning at the stakes of Smithfield! Through a long line of bold forefathers the banner of the Truth of God has been handed down to you. From the Anabaptists, and the Covenanters and the Puritans and men of whom the world was not worthy, its folds have passed down to your protecting care! Oh, by the fact that it shall wave one day over all the defeated hosts of Hell—that Christ shall plant it on the battlements of the arch-enemy's proudest castles—rally, now, for God and for the right and for the Truth, for the doctrines of His Word, for the imperishable Gospel that abides forever and ever! Who will be a coward now and shrink back from this conflict?

Remember, next, another word—the *captives* whom it is your hope, by the Holy Spirit's power, to redeem from the slavery of sin. How our soldiers of the Indian mutiny advanced like lions against the mutineers when they remembered Cawnpore and all the cruelties to which their Brethren had been exposed! How unweariedly they marched, how sternly they fought when they were within sight of the foe! After this sort should we

fight with those who have enslaved and injured our Brethren. Remember, there are tens of thousands of God's elect who are captives to death and Hell—some of them blasphemers, many of them drunkards, some plunged in the direst vice, others of them in the blackest despair—and it is only through your efforts, blessed of the Holy Spirit, that they are to be set free! I charge you, therefore, earnestly contend for their liberties!

When David and his men came to Ziklag and found that their wives and children had been carried away captive, how rapidly did they pursue the foe and how courageously did they fly upon the spoilers to ransom their wives and children from captivity! Your children may still be in captivity to Satan! Your husband still a prisoner, your wife not yet emancipated. Your brother, or neighbor, or sister still in “the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.” Soldiers of the Cross, as you love liberty, yourselves, and as you love your kinsfolk and your fellow countrymen, I charge you—come to the battle, that these may be set free by the Holy Spirit's power!

Remember, again and this word ought to stimulate us to fight well, *the enemy*, the black and cruel enemy. We contend not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness. Our warfare is not with men, but with evil in every shape and form. Our warfare is with the serpent who blighted Eden and who destroyed our race! O God, if anything could make us fight, it would be enmity to the old dragon who has been the murderer of our race! Yet one more encouragement and that is *our reward*. “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.” If by your prayers and tears, through God's Holy Spirit, any should be saved, you shall have joy on earth akin to angels' joy and in Heaven unfurling honors shall be bestowed upon you by the Master Himself, when He shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

I will put these five things, then, together. By the King who leads you, by the banner that waves above you, by your captive Brethren who wait to be delivered, by the horrible enemy against whom we may well take revenge and by the glorious reward, let every soldier gird his sword upon his thigh in this, the time when kings go forth to battle.

IV. THE HIGHEST ENCOURAGEMENTS READILY PRESENT THEMSELVES TO INDUCE YOU TO JOIN THE WARRING ARMIES. I shall mention these encouragements. It is quite certain that *God has an elect people* still upon the earth—then don't you see that it is hopeful work to find out these elect ones by the preaching of the Word of God? “I have much people in this city” must have been a great encouragement to the Apostle when he went there. God has much people in London, yet, and I am persuaded He has many people in this congregation that gathers here— and as the farmer is encouraged to sow his seed in good soil, from which he may reasonably expect a large harvest, so ought you to be encouraged to work for Jesus Christ just now.

Remember, also, that *God has never failed a true worker yet*. Many have been discouraged, but God has, in the long run, if they have been true to

Him, given them their reward. Oh, it cannot be that we shall be disappointed! It is not written, “Paul plants, Apollos waters and God gives no increase.” No—“Paul plants, Apollos waters and God gives the increase.” God is not tied to give success and as a Sovereign He may do as He wills, but the whole record through, the faithful have not been left of God. Remember, too, that *if you did not see any souls converted, yet God would be glorified by your exaltation of Christ* and your talking of Christ—and by your earnest prayers and tears for the good of others. You are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, as well in them that perish, as in them that are saved. You will have done your duty and in so doing will be accepted of the Most High. To the battle, then, my Brothers! To the battle, for you cannot fail!

Remember *the promises*, let them come up before your mind—believe them, and go in the strength of them. “In due season you shall reap if you faint not.” “God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labor of love.” “As the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days.” “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hand: for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that.”

O do not desire to be the spiritual parent of a new-born soul? Would you not rejoice to pluck some brand from the burning, to rescue some sinking sinner from a seething Hell? Then, I beseech you, in prayerful anxiety, with much dependence upon God, use the means! And those means are simply these—the telling abroad of the Gospel and the persuading of men to lay hold on Eternal Life—which Eternal Life lies in believing in Jesus Christ whom God has sent! Lastly, if nothing else could nerve my Brethren here to service, I should like to remind them of one solemn fact and call them, stir them to exercise by THE SOLEMN DANGER OF INACTION. Read at your leisure the connection of my text, “It came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle.”

David sent Joab, his servant, to contend with the Ammonites. Unhappy king, unhappy king! He had been called to fight the Lord’s battles. *He* had been anointed king for the very purpose—to be a captain in Israel—but a fit of sloth had seized him and, true in David’s case, was our children’s song—

***“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”***

The eyes that ought to have been looking on the foe, looked on Bathsheba! The heart that ought to have been stout against the enemies of Israel, softened with lascivious desires and the king had a fall—not from the battlement of his house—but a fall from the elevation of his purity and faith

from which he never altogether recovered. It left the blackest stain upon his reputation.

Such are the dangers of inaction to us all—it may not precisely take that form—for Satan knows how to adapt the temptation to each man's temperament and to each woman's case. I do believe it is before every Christian either to serve his God with all his heart, or to fall into sin. I believe we must either go forward or we must fall. The rule is in Christian life, if we do not bring forth fruit unto the Lord our God, we shall lose even our leaves and stand like a winter's tree, bare and withered. God grant you, Brethren, to make no ill choice in this matter, but to resolve that if you are overtaken in a fault, it shall not be because you traveled so slowly that sin could readily overtake you. I would remind you that in some form or other evil must come to you if you loiter—if you will not serve your Lord, neither shall you be established.

If you will not bring forth fruit to His Glory, neither can you expect the comforts of His Gospel. How terrible are those words which I would gladly make to ring like a thunderblast in the ear of every professor here—"Curse you Meroz, says the angel of the Lord. Curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Remember the Master's words, with which I conclude, "He that is not with Me is against Me. And he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad."

And now, by the blood that bought you. By the Spirit that quickens you. By the Heaven that awaits you, Brothers and Sisters, I ask you to go with me to the battle! Deacons, Elders of the Church, Sunday school teachers, all of you come with me to the battle and let us see whether during the next few months the Lord does not give us a greater blessing than we have ever had before! I believe He will even open the windows of Heaven and pour us out a blessing. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 145.

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THE SAFEGUARDS OF FORGIVENESS

NO. 2981

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1906.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.
And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also has put
away your sin; you shall not die. However...”*
2 Samuel 12:13, 14.

“HOWEVER.” There was a qualification to the pardon granted to David. There is no need for me to enter into any of the details of his enormous sin. To make any excuse for it would be to become a partner in it. It was without excuse and if David, himself, were here with us, there is no one present who would so bitterly condemn him as he would condemn himself. He would be provoked to the utmost indignation by any attempt to offer an apology for the great transgression into which he fell, surrounded, as it were, by so many circumstances which tended to make it even worse than it otherwise might have been.

In reading this narrative, one cannot help being struck with the fact that when Nathan had brought home the sin to David—and the conscience of the monarch which had been sleeping for some months was awakened to a true sense of his guilt, pardon was at once granted to the sorrowing penitent. As soon as he said, “I have sinned against the Lord,” the same Prophet who had, by God’s Grace, brought him to conviction of sin, gave him the assurance of absolution—“The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” Truly—

“Wonders of Grace to God belong.”

The pardoning of great sin is amazing, but the pardoning of great sin so rapidly—the forgiveness immediately following the confession—is among the things to be set down as worthy of special gratitude in the heart and special praise with the lips. One fears, however, lest, by the preaching up of the abounding mercy of God in suddenly putting away great sin, some might be led to think lightly of sin. It has been often raised as an objection to the full proclamation of the Grace of God that it tends to make men think that the escape from sin is very easy and, consequently, causes them to imagine that sin, itself, is a less deadly thing than it really is. Now, I will not deny that Antinomianism is natural to the human heart and, as there have been men who have turned the Grace of God into licentiousness in the past, so there will be, in the future, men who will make out of God’s mercy an argument in favor of their sin. Those who act thus are among the very worst of sinners, “whose damnation is just,” as Paul wrote concerning those who said, “Let us do

evil, that good may come.” I have read that a spider will extract poison from the flower from which the bee extracts honey so, surely, from that very Truth of God from which a renewed heart extracts reasons for holiness, unregenerate men have been known to extract excuses for sin! If they do so, I can only say that they are “without excuse.” Some have actually caused the precious blood of Jesus Christ, Himself, to be to them a savor of death unto death by using the Doctrine of the Atonement as an excuse for their transgressions! If they do so, however, it certainly is not the fault of the Truth of God, nor the fault of the Infinite wisdom and prudence of God, for He has, in many remarkable ways, taken care to put safeguards around His free mercy. He does forgive and He will forgive, blessed be His holy name—and however men may pervert His mercy, He will not cease to bestow that mercy upon sinners! He will still continue His loving kindness, yet He has put safeguards around the Doctrine of forgiveness—and of the safeguards I am now going to speak.

And, first, I shall speak of *the safeguards which were provided in David’s case*. And then, secondly, *of those which are provided in our own case*. This will lend us to notice, in the third place, *God’s grand aim with us and what other great endeavor should be in connection with that aim*.

I. First, then, let us notice THE SAFEGUARDS THAT WERE PUT AROUND DAVID’S CASE, lest David, or anyone else, should think that because sin was readily forgiven, it was in itself a little thing.

For, notice, first, that *David was made to see his sin in its true light before it was forgiven*. Nathan did not go to him and say, “David, you have committed a much greater wrong than you have supposed. You have disgraced your character and you have brought dishonor upon the God you love—but you are forgiven.” No, he uttered a parable which set David’s own character before him as being of the very base and meanest kind. The description of the traveler who came to the rich man, who then went and took the one ewe lamb from the poor man with which to make a feast for the traveler, was well conceived. It was a trap in which David was cleverly caught and made to see himself, though he had not the slightest idea, at the moment, that he was seeing himself at all. But when Nathan said to him, “You are the man,” he was made to feel that he was a mean wretch who deserved to be condemned to death. His indignation was awakened against himself and against his own actions—and thus the Lord took care that David should not receive pardon till he had realized the greatness of his sin! This would be a strong check to him in the future, keeping him from ever falling into that sin again.

Moreover, *he was made to condemn himself*. Before Nathan said to David, “You shall not die,” the king had pronounced sentence upon himself, for he had said, concerning the man described in the parable, “As the Lord lives, the man that has done this thing shall surely die,” not knowing that it was himself whom he was condemning! But he pronounced his own sentence—and after that he was forgiven. Now, dear Friends, this is just what the Lord does with sinners before He pardons them! First, He makes them see their sin. Some of us remember well when that terrible spectacle haunted us day and night. We had long

known that we had sinned, but we had no idea that sin was such a monstrous, horrible thing as we then saw it to be. We had read of strange monsters of the deep, hideous and terrible creatures, but when we saw sin, we beheld something more frightful and loathsome than our worst dreams had ever brought before our minds! Then we condemned ourselves. Well do I remember when I signed my own death warrant—had the Lord then threatened to strike me dead upon the spot, I could not, even if He had given me leave to plead with Him—have urged any reason why He should not destroy me! I have a thousand times wondered that my soul was not sent to Hell! At night I have feared that I should be there before the morning light and, in the daytime, I have often trembled lest, before the night should come, I should find myself in Hell. Having thus condemned myself, then it was that God forgave me—and I do not believe that any sinner is ever forgiven until he consents, in his soul, to the Justice of God if he should never be forgiven. He must know that he is a sinner and that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing, for which he deserves to be sent to Hell! And when he reaches that point, then pardon will come to him. O dear Brothers and Sister, do you not see what a blessed check this is upon that man? Now, when he receives forgiveness, he receives it as one who knows what that forgiveness covers, and who also knows the condemnation from which that pardon has delivered him!

There was, in David's case, the further safeguard that *he was made to feel the majesty of the Divine Word*. When Nathan came to David as God's representative, he spoke to him a simple parable to which a child might listen with interest. But there was great majesty in it, for it unveiled the secrets of the guilty monarch's heart. It made him see himself as he appeared in the clear, translucent light of Heaven—and not as he might have represented himself in a more favorable light. Read the whole page and note how Nathan made the truth lash him to the quick—"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, I anointed you king over Israel and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul; and I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto you such and such things. Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight. You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house; because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."

Nathan does not spare him! Every word is like a sharp sword piercing him to the heart. David is made to feel that the Word of God can search out his most secret things and make him see himself in his true character, disguise himself as he may! And then, when he had confessed his sin, the same stern Prophet who had spoken so severely, said to him, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die." Oh, how welcome that message must have been to David! How soft and sweet

those sounds must have been to his ears after the harsher notes to which he had listened—just as we have sometimes heard the martial music that has thrilled and startled us and then there has come a soft strain of gentle music, or else a brief season of welcome silence by which our ears have been rested and refreshed. So was it when Nathan turned from condemnation to comfort and said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” This would henceforth always be a check to David, for he would feel that if he sinned, that Word of God would again find him out—that Word which had first stricken him to the dust by its severity—and then had won his heart’s love by its tenderness.

A fourth safeguard was this—*David was made to see the greatness of his sin by the effect which it produced upon others.* Nathan said to David, “By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” As you read some of his Psalms, you can see that David knew that the Lord’s enemies did blaspheme because of his sin. The party that loved the Lord was strong at court just then and the king was the patron and head of that party—but there were men of Belial who were the ungodly party in the land. And when they caught the king, himself, tripping thus, I guarantee you that they talked of it at every street corner. It was a sad topic for the faithful ones to speak of and the saints of God, when they met together, must have wept, for they could make no excuse for the king’s crime—and they must have felt that a very deadly stab had been given to the cause of truth and righteousness. David was made to realize all that and it must have helped to keep him from sinning again in such a fashion because he loved the cause of God, and the house of God, and the servants of God—and there had been a period, in his past life, when he would not have believed that it were possible for him to be the means of breaking down the walls of Zion! When he had been forgiven, his first anxiety was that God would undo the mischief which his sin had worked and, therefore, he prayed to the Lord, “Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem.”

In addition to these safeguards, there is that, “however,” which I have included in our text. I call the serious attention of every carelessly-walking Christian here to that, “however.” How many times my eyes have rested upon that word and it has chastened my sins, and driven me to my God! David was forgiven, but from that day the sword never departed from his house. God let him know that although he was pardoned, some of the results of his sin still remained. The guilt of it was gone, as Nathan said, “The Lord has put away your sin,” but the evil effect of it was still manifest—and that must be dealt with by the Lord’s chastising rod. What a sad change came over David’s life from this time! Recall the name of Tamar, Amnon and Absalom, and think how degraded his own family had become. Then, one and another rebelled against him—enemies within his kingdom and without sought to overthrow him and, after his sin in numbering the people, God’s own angel was sent to smite the nation with a terrible pestilence. The earlier part of David’s life was full of music and dancing—the latter part had far more of mourning and

lamentation in it. After his great fall, he had to go softly all the rest of his days and his dying testimony, though full of faith, was marred by the regret, “although my house is not so with God.”

He was a man so highly favored of God and so much after God’s own heart in many ways, that if he could have been without the rod, God would have spared him. If this sin of his could have been winked at and he could have been delivered from its consequences without chastisement, God would have delivered him. But it was not possible. God does not give such exemption as that to any of His children and He did not give it to David. That warm heart of His which in many respects was so excellent, was apt, from its very fervor of affection, to crave too much of the love of the creature. So David had to be chastised again and again. God did not afflict him willingly—He did it because it was for his good. This folly in the heart of His child could not be driven out by anything but the rod and, therefore, the rod he must have. He was a grand man, one in whom the Grace of God shone very conspicuously, but he was a man of like passions with ourselves and we have reason to thank God that he was—because his experience becomes all the more instructive to us from the fact that while it teaches us that God can and will forgive us if we repent of our great and gross sins, yet it also teaches us that sin is an evil and a bitter thing and that, though the guilt of it may be removed, the evil consequences of it will cling to us and be a subject of sorrow to us till God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

II. Now, secondly, I want to point out to you THE SAFEGUARDS IN OUR OWN CASE. I cannot say that the safeguards are the same in every case because the experience of God’s children vary considerably.

In the case of some of us, when God’s forgiveness came to us, we could not think lightly of sin, because, *for a long time before we found mercy, we had been under a terrible sense of guilt.* I am not speaking of all Christians, but there are some of us who were for weeks, or months, or even years, waiting in outer darkness before the Gate of Mercy was opened to us. I will not deny that it was our unbelief in Christ that kept us there, but, at the same time, I see how God, in His wise Providence, overruled even that to make us ever afterwards hate sin as burnt children dread the fire. Oh, what burns of that sort I had! They seemed as if they would never heal, the fire had gone so deep. I felt that I could sympathize with Job when he said, “My soul chooses strangling, and death rather than my life,” for I feared that no mercy could ever come to me. I have blessed God a thousand times that I was so long in finding Christ because through that very experience I have been the better qualified to speak to others who are in a similar condition. John Bunyan was for years tossed about with inward tumults through a deep sense of sin. And when, at last, at the sight of the Cross, the great burden rolled off his back and disappeared in the sepulcher of Christ, he did not think sin a little thing! It had been such a dreadful burden to him for so many years that he ever afterwards abhorred it and adored the wondrous love which had forever delivered him from its power. With some persons there

is a check which operates throughout the rest of their lives as the result of that long period of depression of spirit and despair of soul which preceded the hour of light and joy. God kept us out in the cold so long in order that, ever afterwards, we might know what it was like and not want to go outside again. He made us feel the aching of the hungry belly so that we might not again wander into the far country and long to feed from the sinner's trough. After our past experience there, our Father's arms about our neck became all the more precious to us and there was the less likelihood that we should ever go back to that state of sin and sorrow from which we had escaped!

I say again that this is true only of some—it is not necessary for all, and it is only a few of God's servants who have passed through such an experience as that. But I think I may say that all who receive God's mercy have this safeguard, that *for a greater or less period, they have been made to feel the death-swoon of sin*. It may last but a few minutes, but, before Divine Mercy comes to the heart, there is usually a striking of the soul with the chill horror of despair and there is also a driving into the very marrow of the soul that sharp two-edged sword of God which kills all carnal confidence. In the case of persons who are suddenly brought into the life and light of full salvation, their sight of sin in its horror is but momentary. They hang over the precipice and feel as if they were gone, but, at that very instant, the Divine Hand is stretched out to remove them. The sentence of death must be passed upon all men because all have sinned—we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we may learn not to trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. That glimpse of the open jaws of Hell, though it is but for an instant—that sight of the descending axe of Divine Vengeance and of our own neck laid upon the block is enough to make us, even in a moment, pass through a process which divorces us forever from the love of sin, makes us feel that it is a deadly and damning thing and causes us to cry unto God to deliver us from it! That sense of sin is, I take it, a part of the safeguard which God provides for each forgiven man to prevent him from drawing inferences of licentiousness from God's abundant mercy to him.

But there is a better safeguard than that. *The fact that Jesus Christ is our Sacrifice and Savior ought to prevent us from ever going into sin again*. You may have heard of the king who made a law that any person committing a certain crime in his country should have both his eyes plucked out. It happened that the very first criminal brought before him, under that law, was his own son whose guilt was clearly brought home to him. His father was the judge and there remained nothing for him to do but to pronounce upon his son the sentence that he should have both his eyes torn out. But, rigid as he was as a law-giver, such was the father's tenderness of heart that he bade the officer first pluck out one of his son's eyes and then take out one of his own. I should think that that father's empty eye socket would always remind his son of the crime which he had committed—and eventually prevent him from ever offending in that way again. Surely, that crime could never be pleasant to him after it had been so painful to his father! Believer, look at your Lord

and Savior, Jesus Christ, and say to Him, "What are these wounds in Your hands, dear Lord? What are those scars on Your feet, and what is that deep gash in Your side which leads to Your very heart?" "These," He says, "are the wounds caused by your sins, for I was wounded for your transgressions, I was bruised for your iniquities—the chastisement of your peace was upon Me, and with My stripes you are healed."

O my Brothers and Sisters, the next time you are tempted to sin, let the open wounds of Jesus appeal to you and cause you to say, "I cannot crucify my Lord afresh and put Him to open shame by again sinning against Him." This will help to hold you back when the tempter draws near you. The "cords of a man" and the "bands of love" will draw you the other way much more forcibly and you will say, with Joseph, "How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" You may also say, "It is true that sin has not slain me, but it has slain my Substitute. It is true that sin has not cast me into Hell, yet it brought Hell upon my Substitute. It is true that the wrath of God passed by me, but it fell upon my Well-Beloved, the Bridegroom of my heart, who, in Infinite mercy, bore it all for my sake." The remembrance of this fact will be a most blessed safeguard to hold you back from sin—pardon is free to you, but it cost Him His all and, because of what it cost Him, you feel that you must not sin again.

Remember also that great as the Grace of God is in pardoning sin, *He gives, with pardon, other mercies which are equally great, namely, repentance and renewal of heart.* Wherever the forgiveness of sin comes, there comes with it a turning from sin, a leaving of sin, a fresh view of sin, a different estimate of it. And the heart that once had sought its own pleasure, now seeks God's pleasure! And the man who formerly loved carnal delights is moved to long after heavenly delights from the very moment of his forgiveness. I speak advisedly when I say that the Doctrine of "believe and live" would be a very dangerous one if it were not accompanied by the Doctrine of regeneration. If God did not change the nature of the forgiven sinner, it would be a dangerous thing to give him free forgiveness—but when the two things go together, they counteract any evil which might have sprung out of either the one or the other by itself—and all good and no evil can come from them when they are preached in their due connection. "Believe and live," is true. But "You must be born again," is equally true. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," is Apostolic Doctrine, but so is this, "Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Change of heart accompanies the forgiveness of sin—and wherever that change of heart is given, there springs up in the renewed soul a deep sense of gratitude to God. "How much I owe!" says the renewed man. "How graciously the love of God has been manifested in my case! What great sin He has forgiven! What enormous transgressions He has blotted out. Now I cannot help loving Him—oh, that I loved Him even more!" And this gratitude becomes in itself a very powerful means of checking the soul in any impulse that it has towards sin—and an equally forceful

incentive in driving it onward towards righteousness, “for the love of Christ constrains us.” It does constrain us! We do not say that it *ought* to do so, as some do when they misquote the text. Its constraining power draws us onward and upward towards our Lord!

These things put together, by the power of God’s most blessed Spirit, lead the renewed man into a holy cautiousness and great watchfulness of soul. I wish I could say that I see as much of this spirit in all professors as I would like to see. But, alas, Brothers and Sisters, I do not! Sin, the very smallest sin—if there can be a small sin—is a great evil and we ought to be deeply and solemnly anxious that even the least deviation from the righteousness of God should not be found in us. If any of you were told serpents which had escaped from their den, were hiding somewhere in your house—perhaps near your bed, or in a cupboard or bookcase—I know that when you reached your house tonight, you would look very carefully on the doorstep and in the hall, to see whether there was a young viper there. You would turn up the doormats, in case there might be one concealed there! But you would not be satisfied until you had thoroughly searched the house from top to bottom, in order that those deadly snakes might all be captured and destroyed! This is just what you ought to do with yourselves, Brethren, for the snakes are there! In every part of your nature, these venomous creatures have been hatched and they have multiplied beyond all calculation. Sins of all shapes and sizes lurk within you! And if God’s Grace does not keep you watchful—before you are aware, you may be painfully conscious of their deadly power!

There is this fact that you must have often noticed—I feel sure that *whether you are aware of the sin itself, or not, you will soon have to be aware of the consequences of it.* You cannot fall into any sin without losing, in some measure, the sweetness of your fellowship with God. I do not need to look out of my window in order to know that there are clouds across the sky. I can tell that the clouds have come, for the light is dim in the room where I am reading. So, I may not be conscious that I have fallen into sin, but the very dimness of the light of God’s Presence becomes the indicator to my soul that it is so. Perhaps you have had a prosperous day in business and the friends you have met with have all been very kind and cheerful, and nothing has happened during the day to distress you. Yet when you get home, you feel heavy and dull, and you say to yourself, “Why is this?” It is simply that God has been causing you to see that the sweetness of the creature cannot make up for the lack of the Presence of the Creator. If God were to give you all earthly good and yet took His Presence from you—which He will do if sin is within you, and unrepented of—the loss of His Presence would be a greater loss than the loss of the whole world, or even of Heaven itself! If you are in the habit of walking with God—and I trust that many of you are—you will take note of the least stain of sin. You have, perhaps, seen a handkerchief that looked perfectly white. But if there has been a snowfall and you have laid that handkerchief down upon the snow, you have seen its defilement in contrast with the whiteness of the snow! So, if you live

near to God, you will have a very high standard of what you ought to be—and you will see a great deal more sin in yourself than you ever used to see. The fact of your living near to God will never lead you into presumption, nor cause you to think lightly of sin, but it will make what you used to call little things to assume hideous proportions and you will say to yourself, “What a sin it was that I, who have spoken face to face with God, should make that silly remark to my neighbor, a remark that could not minister edification to anybody—that I, who have had power with God in prayer, should be put out of temper by a poor silly maid, or be made to forget myself altogether by some trivial temptation which I ought to have been able to master, and could have mastered if I had given it the least thought!” You may rest quite certain that if God honors any man in public, He takes him aside privately and flogs him well, otherwise he would get elevated and proud, and God will not have that! He will not have Big-Self to serve Him—He will take him down from his high pinnacle and grind him to powder, so as to get all the pride out of him!”

III. The last point, on which I can only speak briefly, is this. ALL THIS INDICATES WHAT GOD’S GREAT AIM IS AND WHAT OURS OUGHT TO BE.

God’s aim is not merely to forgive us and to free us from the penalty of sin, but *to take sin out of us and get rid of it altogether*. The Lord might have forgiven David and yet not have used the rod upon him as He did. That child might not have died, but might have grown up to be David’s comfort and joy. And Absalom might not have turned out such a scapegrace, but might have been his father’s best helper. God might have arranged matters so, but He did not see fit to do it. He seems to say, “My dear child, David, I love you so well that, while I fully forgive you, I will take such measures with you as will effectually prevent you from ever falling into that sin again. I will so deal with you that should you ever have such a temptation as this again, your tendency to that sin shall be very decidedly checked.” Long before his sin with Bathsheba, there were various indications as to David’s special liability to temptation. That sin only threw out upon the surface the evil that was always within him! And now God, having made him see that the deadly cancer is there, begins to use the knife to cut it out of him. God’s business with you, if you are His child, is to get rid of the sin that is within you—to purge you not merely with blood and with hyssop, but with fire, till He has made your nature very different from what it now is.

Our aim should be in conformity with God’s aim, that is to seek to get rid of sin altogether. You have first to realize what your sin really is. It may be that, this day, you have lived a blameless life so far as it can be seen of men, but what about your thoughts? You have never committed adultery as David did, but how many adulteries have you committed in your heart? You were never actually a murderer—God forbid that you ever should be! But when your evil passions have risen, how many times have you been a murderer in the sight of God? We are not merely to

imagine that if we bring our outward moral conduct into conformity with the will of God, we are all right—we are also to look within. Every thought of evil is sin! A photographer will tell you that the object presented to the camera leaves an impression upon it even though the exposure of the sensitive plate was only for the fraction of a moment. Notice, Brothers and Sisters, whenever sin is brought before your mind even in imagination, whether it is attractive to you or not. I hope that you catch yourself saying, “O my God, how is it that I can think of such a thing with any degree of tolerance?” You feel that you would not commit that sin—you would rather die than commit it—yet you are not as displeased as you ought to be at even the thought of it. Perhaps you almost wish that you might do this evil thing. If so, that shows which way your nature still gravitates—to the old nature which is so corrupt that it stinks! And when it stinks most in your nostrils, it is, perhaps, best for you, for then it drives you away from being proud of it and takes you to that dear Savior in whom alone your life can ever be found!

Brothers and Sisters, in all your spiritual engagements, note how far your heart is really in them. Do not be content if you can say, “I went to the Tabernacle last Thursday night.” Did you really worship there in spirit and in truth? Did you profit by the Word read and preached? Do not be satisfied if you can say, “I read a chapter in the Bible and offered prayer to God this morning.” What is the use of all this if your heart was not in the exercise? “Rend your hearts, and not your garments,” is a message which would sometimes be appropriate to you. What we have to look at is how near the soul gets to God, and how far it gains the mastery over sin. If it is a question of the forgiveness of our sin for the sake of Him who hung upon the Cross, blessed be His name, we have that and we have it perfectly in Him! If it is a question of our righteousness in the sight of God, so far as the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is concerned, that also is ours, as everything else that is His is ours! But as to the cleansing of the heart, the purging of all secret places, the driving out of every lurking sin and the getting rid of every imagination and wish and desire that is contrary to God, this has to be battled for, through faith in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Eternal Spirit! And the complete victory has yet to be gained. We must still continue to cry with Paul, “Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But with him we can also say, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are not to shut our eyes and fancy that the war is over, that all our spiritual enemies are slain—but we are to press onward to the end! Perhaps, even at the very end, we may have a stern fight with fierce temptations, as John Knox and many others have had, but, in the name of the Lord, we will destroy them! In any case, we must not give way to sin. We dare not let sin have dominion over us. We must strive and struggle against it and we shall do so, for He who has pardoned us will also sanctify us. He who has delivered us from death by sin will also deliver us from the death of sin and will present us to Himself “a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

Brothers and Sisters, do not let me, for a moment, take away from you the joy of perfect pardon which is already yours if you have believed in Jesus Christ. Your sins, which were many, are all forgiven. Let no doubt upon that point come into your mind! Poor troubled Sinner, do not be distressed as though you could not find immediate pardon through Jesus Christ, for you can. If you believe in Him, your sins are forgiven you for His sake. But I am sure that if you are in a right state of heart, you do not need to have pardon and yet be allowed to live in sin. You could not be content, even if the Lord were to forgive you all your sins, if He did not also change your nature and deliver you from the power of sin. That these two things are to be had in Jesus Christ, let us firmly believe—and for the realization of these two things, let us earnestly pray and thrive! And may God graciously give them to us all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 14.**

Verse 1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.* Come back, poor wanderer! My Brother or my Sister, if your heart has grown cold toward your Lord and Master, return to Him this very hour! This message comes from God, Himself, through His servant the Prophet, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.”

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* As if He feared that we could not find suitable words to speak to Him, He puts the right words into our mouths! Our Heavenly Father is so anxious to bring back His children when they wander from Him that He actually makes the prayer with which they may come back to Him—“Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render to You the praise which is Your due, which shall come from our hearts, and which our lips shall express.” If there are any of you here who have grieved your Heavenly Father by growing cold at heart, I do trust that the spirit of God will sweetly draw you back to your old standing and to something higher and nearer to God than even that was!

3. *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods. For in You the fatherless finds mercy.* If you expect the Lord to smile upon you, you must have done with all your idols! You must put away all your false confidences and those other sinful things in which you have found even a little joy, and you must come back to your Father, throwing away those rivals which have been set up in your heart and asking Him to give you Grace to live henceforth for Him alone.

4. *I will heal their backsliding.* “Nobody else can do it, but I can, and I will. I will not chide them anymore, I will not keep them at a distance

from Me as unworthy to draw near to Me, but, ‘I will heal their backslidings.’”

4. *I will love them freely.* That is a grand sentence! God could not love us anyway else, for what price could you and I bring with which to purchase His love? And if His love were not free, it could never come to such unworthy ones as we are—“I will love them freely.”

4, 5. *For My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel.* You know that in the East the dew is a great fertilizer, even more so than it is here. When a plot of ground is all browned by the hot sun, the dew makes it green and fruitful again. So God says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* That is, upwards, bearing his flowers as near Heaven as he can—not groveling as he once did. He shall grow rapidly, as the daffodil lily does, which seems to start up, in the East, after a shower of rain and come to maturity at once! Lord, grant that we may bring forth lilies of Grace all of a sudden! May there be in us the beauty of holy Christian love which shall come all at once! “He shall grow as the lily.”

5. *And cast forth his root as Lebanon.* There will be rapid growth, but sure growth. The lily has frail beauty, but Lebanon has the permanent lasting cedar—and God can make the graces of His people to be as enduring as they are beautiful!

6, 7. *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* His children, who were led into mischief by bad example, shall be drawn back again.

7-9. *They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

—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.**

MEANS FOR RESTORING THE BANISHED NO. 950

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Neither does God respect any person: yet does He devise means,
that His banished are not expelled from Him.”
2 Samuel 14:14.*

THE woman of Tekoah, in arguing with David for the recall of his son Absalom, argued with great shrewdness. After craftily entrapping the king by her parable, she then pleaded with him in persuasive terms—the cleverness of which we must admire—though the end aimed at was not consistent with the impartial justice which every magistrate ought to exercise. In effect she pleaded thus—“It is true that Absalom slew his brother Amnon. But nevertheless spare his life, and permit him to return from exile. What is done cannot be undone. Death is the common lot of all, and one way or another we must all become like water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up.

“By the death of his brother the slain man cannot be brought to life again. Have pity, therefore, upon Absalom, and quench not the coal of Israel’s hope by executing the death penalty on your successor. It is true you must have no respect to persons, neither does God have any, but still He has been pleased in His infinite mercy to ordain a way by which the refugee manslayer may be restored to his home.” It was well known to David that on the death of the High Priest, manslayers who had found shelter in the cities set apart for refuge were allowed to go home and take full possession of their lands, being by the High Priest’s death absolved from further liability to revengeful kinsmen of their victims, and allowed to mingle with other Israelites in the worship of God.

“God then,” says she, “has devised means by which His banished should not always be expelled from Him—do you likewise. Though Absalom may have fled for awhile, and been in banishment, have pity upon your son, and restore him.” Thus much concerning the woman’s argument, and no more. She gained her point, and we hear no more of her, nor need we think further of her and her shrewdness.

Last Sunday morning we addressed you upon the infinite grandeur of God, upon His Sovereignty, and the way in which He exercises His will, unaided of mortal hand. Now, from the greatness of God to His mercy is no step, for the two should always be blended in our thoughts as they are in His Nature. Great as He is, He stoops to consider His side, His creatures, and Sovereign though He is, His name is Love. He regards not the person of any man, for what is man to God? What is man that God is mindful of him, or the son of man that He visits him? Man is so utterly insignificant in comparison with God, that whole nations are as nothing—yes, less than nothing and vanity.

Yet despite the greatness of God, His wisdom is put to work to devise means by which guilty ones who have been banished from Him may be restored to Him. And it is of this devising means, this blessed thoughtfulness and ingenuity for restoring His banished ones that I hope to have Divine Grace given me to speak this morning. First we shall talk with you upon our first outlawry, and how God devises means to deliver us from that. Secondly, we shall speak upon some secondary banishments through which certain of God's people have passed, and how God devises means to bring them back from those. And lastly, we shall have a practical lesson to gather from the subject.

I. First, there was A GREAT AND UNIVERSAL OUTLAWRY proclaimed by God against us all, as members of a rebel race. We have all broken His Law. Willfully and wickedly have we rebelled against the majesty of Heaven. We are, therefore, in our natural estate, banished ones—expelled from His love and favor—waiting the time when the sentence of His wrath shall be fulfilled, and, “Depart, you cursed,” shall flash its lightning flame into our spirits. The Ever-Blessed God has devised means by which we may be delivered from this state of exile. And the means are very similar to that which was alluded to by the woman of Tekoah.

He has set apart Jesus Christ to be to us a City of Refuge and a High Priest, and precisely what occurred to the manslayer occurs to us. Now, what did happen to the manslayer? First of all, as soon as he had killed a man inadvertently, knowing that the next of kin would be after him to avenge the death, he fled, hot foot, as we say, to the nearest City of Refuge. And when he had once reached the gates of that city, he was secure. Dear Brothers and Sisters, even thus the Lord Jesus Christ was to us in days gone by a City of Refuge, and we fled to Him. Do you not remember the moment when you passed the portal, and were safe within the salvation which God appoints for walls and bulwarks?

It was a happy thing to feel secure from vengeance. It was delightful to be able to feel—“Sin may pursue me, but it cannot slay me. The blood of Jesus stands between me and punishment. I am now, through my Substitute, secured from the wrath to come.” Happy day when we thus began to realize that we were safe in the Savior, shielded by the Atonement. At the first we thought this was all, and we were content that it should be all. But after awhile deeper Truths of God began to open up to us, and the type was more completely fulfilled.

The manslayer was bound to remain within the City of Refuge. He was a sort of prisoner on parole within the city bounds—if he went beyond the liberties of the town for any purpose, or on any pretense, he did it at his own risk, and was liable to be slain by any kinsman of the person whom he had killed. The Law only protected him while he remained within its appointed sanctuary. This banishment might continue for years, and the manslayer might die away from his native village, and the portion of land which belonged to his family. But if it so happened that the High Priest died, he and all others who had been sheltered within the city walls required that shelter no more.

They were clear from all further vengeance. They could return to their homes without risk of being slain. Their liberty was complete. So I trust

many of us have learned that we are not only safe through the blood of Jesus, but what is far better—we are absolved from sin. We are not now as men shut up from punishment—but as *acquitted* men against whom no charge can be laid—we walk at large. We dread no condemnation now, for our High Priest has died. At first we felt safe, but that feeling was clogged with conditions and limitations. But now we know that, “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

We are certain that we are clear before the Judgment Seat of God, and shall stand without fear before the Great White Throne, when in full blaze of holiness Divine Justice shall be revealed. We are emancipated from the bondage of the Law through the death of our Ever-Blessed High Priest. The manslayer went home, and if anyone had taken possession of his estate during his absence, he turned him out. And if the vines and fig trees had been untrimmed, he put them into the right fruit-bearing state. And if the fields had grown cumbered with weeds, he began to till them afresh.

When the holy festivals came round, he who had been an exile before could go up with the great company that kept holy day without fear of being attacked by the avenger of blood. He had no blood-guiltiness upon him any longer, the death of the High Priest had ceremonially made him clean and admitted him into the throng of worshippers. And here is the joy of the Believer—all that he had lost by sin is restored to him by Christ’s death! This world is his and worlds to come. He uses the once forfeited blessings of this life for his Master’s glory, believing them no longer to be common or unclean. Now he mingles with the most joyous of the saints.

For him their holy song, for him their access with confidence into the Grace wherein we stand. He rejoices that through the death of Jesus, the High Priest, he is perfectly restored to all the rights and liberties of the Israel of God. Oh, what a blessing this is! And what a means has God devised for the complete restoring of His exiles! This is a method worthy of our God. Jesus died instead of us! Jesus suffered the death penalty on our behalf—our faith makes His substitutionary sacrifice to be ours, and in that moment we have no longer ground for fear! We are discharged from every dread! We walk in blessed liberty, we see our privileges and avail ourselves of them. Jesus has restored that which He took not away—

***“In Him the sons of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.”***

Thus has God ordained a most effectual means that His banished are not expelled from Him.

Though this is the grand means for restoring exiled man to communion with his God, yet through the depravity of our nature it would fail to be of any service to us, did not God further ordain means to make us *willing* to avail ourselves of it. There was need, not only to spread a feast of mercy, but to constrain us to partake of it. When we hear of salvation by Jesus, our proud nature at once rejects Him. We listen to the wondrous story of a substitutionary sacrifice, but like the Jews we require a sign, or as the Greeks, we seek after some fancied wisdom. He comes unto His own, and His own receive him not. Therefore the Lord further devises means by which the sacrifice of Jesus shall be accepted by us, and shall become our confidence.

The Holy Spirit is specially appointed to work salvation in us—He subdues the will, and converts the heart. He leads sinners to Jesus, and applies the cleansing blood to their consciences. He draws with mysterious influences till the unwilling heart relents. If we will not of ourselves run to the refuge city, messengers are sent to invite, to persuade, to compel us to come in. God wills not that His love should be baffled—He resolves to save. He devises means to convert the sinner. And now let each one of us think for a minute of his own case. It will be a gracious exercise for each Believer here to remember the special way which God devised to bring him to Jesus. Turn over now your life-records, and read the page which records your spiritual birthday, and trace the hand of God in your conversion, each one of you. I may help you by mentioning a few of the more prominent means which Grace employs.

In most cases it is the preaching of the Gospel which restores the wandering. The preaching of the Word is God's great saving agency among mankind. How gracious is God to ordain a means so simple, yet by His Grace, so efficient! How wondrously does He co-work with His ministers so that His Word shall not return unto Him void! Many of His chosen, but banished ones, are so far off in their exile that they will not come to hear the message of Grace. God therefore devises means to bring them where the Truth is declared. Not a few are led to hear the Truth from the force of education and custom, and of these, great numbers are effectually called.

But others, apparently less favored, are brought by equally successful methods. Some are induced by a friend to come, and they thus hear the Gospel out of courtesy to him who invited them. Yet in many cases the gracious Lord has saved by the Word those whom that feeble motive brought within its reach. Another class feel the stimulus of an equally undeserving motive. A certain preacher may be much spoken of. He may be a reputed eccentric, or railed at as fanatical. At any rate, he has a name, and therefore hundreds are drawn to his ministry out of curiosity. This is not commendable in them, but it is often overruled by God, for, like Zaccheus, they are called by Jesus, and He abides in their house.

Curiosity is one of the means which God devises for bringing men to hear His Gospel, that thereby He may lead back His banished—that they be not expelled from Him. There have even been cases of persons who have heard the Gospel from worse motives than these. They have been actuated even by blasphemy and profanity, yet, strange to say it, God's all-conquering Grace has made even this to be the way by which His banished ones should be brought back to Him. The memorable case of Mr. Thorpe, a noted preacher of the Gospel, rises to one's mind here. He was, before his conversion, a member of an infidel club.

In those days infidelity was more coarse than now. And this skeptical society took the name of the "Hell Fire Club." Among their amusements was that of holding imitations of religious services, and exhibiting mimicries of popular ministers. Young Thorpe went to hear Mr. Whitfield, that he might mimic him before his profane associates. He heard him so carefully that he caught his tones and his manner, and somewhat of his doctrines. When the club met to see his caricature of the great preacher, Thorpe opened a big Bible that he might take a text to preach from it ex-

tempore after the manner of Mr. Whitfield. His eye fell on the passage, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." As he spoke upon that text he was carried beyond himself, lost all thought of mockery, spoke as one in earnest, and was the means of his own conversion!

He was likely to say, in after years, "If ever I was helped of God to preach, it was that very day when I began in sport but ended in earnest." He was carried by the force of Truth beyond his own intention, like one who would sport in a river, and is swept away by its current. From a thousand instances I gather that a man is in the way of hope while hearing the Word. Who can tell? The scoffer may be reached by the arrows of Truth. Where shots are flying, the most careless may be wounded. God, who makes use of His ministers as He wills, can bring His banished home by His Word, even though the hearer had far other motives in hearing it.

Even a minister's failures may be a part of God's ordained scheme of salvation. We sometimes feel, after we have finished our discourse, that we have done very badly, but we are poor judges of our own work. If we have earnestly done our best, God may have turned our thoughts in a direction in which our words may have failed us. But the Truth of God may have been, for all that, more powerful for that very reason. When most out of our way, we may be most in God's way. The archer who drew his bow at a venture, little thought of piercing the joints of Ahab's armor, yet his arrow did the work well.

Holy Mr. Tennant, in America, had with great care studied a sermon, because he knew that an eminent skeptic was likely to attend the service. He hoped that a sound argument might win his hearer, but in his intense earnestness he became too absorbed to follow out the chain of his reasoning, his speech faltered, and though generally a man remarkable for eloquence, he came to a standstill, and concluded the service abruptly. This, however, was the means of the conversion of his skeptical friend. For as he had often heard Mr. Tennant before, and noticed how remarkably well he had spoken, and had now regretted his painful hesitation, he said within himself, "There is evidently such a thing as the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for Mr. Tennant has been helped at other times, and not on this occasion." That one gleam of Truth sufficed to show him other truths, and he became converted to God.

Oh, blessed blundering, blessed faltering, blessed breaking-down! If it is a part of God's means by which His banished may be brought back, gladly would I be dumb and forfeit the sweet luxury of fluent speech, if my silence would better serve the purpose of my Lord! I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit often works most when our feebleness is most apparent. Our infirmity we may well glory in, if such is the case. Certainly, the wonder-working God is pleased to send us as His ambassadors, and by our means He brings back those whom sin had banished from His Presence.

But, Beloved, besides the vocal preaching of the Gospel, the printed word of God, itself, is a preacher through the eye. Holy Scripture has often been the sole means in the hands of its Divine Author of converting the soul. Many texts of Scripture are notable as soul-winning words. God works through the sacred page, and gives light to the ignorant. Think how God works with His Word, how frequently the ungodly eye has been di-

rected to the precise passage that should be the power of God unto salvation! Why did not that hand turn over another page, and that eye light on another verse? The Lord was there to fix the glance where the blessing lay!

How frequently the Words of Scripture have seemed to the reader to be meant on purpose for him! The exact turn of thought and form of expression have been the channels of blessing. I can never refuse to believe in plenary inspiration while I have before me so many instances in which the mere tense, number and position of certain Words have been the instruments of quickening and consolation. In the very Words of Scripture I see devices for bringing home the banished. That the mind should be prepared for the text is equally remarkable, because there must have been workings of Providence and more spiritual influences in operation to make the mind ready for the peculiar teaching of that chosen text.

I see clearly an elaborate machinery at work—wheel revolves within wheel, cause acts upon cause, event upon event, thought upon thought—and in all I see Divinely ingenious methods for restoring the expelled to their lost inheritance. Certain minds are best reached by the Truth of God as it is re-written and cast into another mold by godly men. There are some who believe on Jesus not so much by His Word as by that of His disciples. “Neither pray I for them alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me through their word.” The value of religious books and tracts cannot be calculated. The modes of expression of some men are, I doubt not, fashioned by the Lord with a view to certain characters which by no other means could be reached.

Bunyan may bless where Baxter fails. Angel James may win the attention where Doddridge is not successful. Cowper may attract where John Newton is disregarded. Even a text may miss where thoughts derived from it may strike and stick. The experience of the writer and his modes of thought are often manifestly adapted for his reader, and there God’s devising is again seen.

But it is not only through the direct teaching of Scripture that the Lord brings His banished to Himself. He has called very many by the casual remarks of earnest Christians, casual as from them, but all ordained in the eternal purpose. I wish we were more in the habit of speaking to our unconverted friends about the things that make for their peace. We might often be delighted by hearing of conversions if we were instant in season and out of season. Sowing beside all waters, our harvest would be far more abundant. God often casts us into certain circumstances on purpose to make us use those circumstances to His Glory—but we are not always awake to His design.

Our reaching the station too late for a train. Our being cast into certain society on board a steamboat. Our overtaking a stranger on the road. Our mistaking a path—all such things as these which happen every day may be only indicators in God’s Providence of some work that we have to do for Him. A Christian minister was one day sent for to visit a dying man, and when he reached the bedside he was gratified by hearing the dying man say, “Sir, I thought I should like to speak with you before I went to Heaven. I thank God I have a good hope through Grace, for I rest on

Christ Jesus, and I wish to tell you that you were the means of my conversion.”

“How so?” said the minister, “Did you attend my ministry, I do not remember to have seen you?” “No, Sir, I was a hearer elsewhere, but one night I met you in the streets of a certain town, and I asked you whether I was going the right way to a certain terrace, and you told me I was going away from it, and had better take the next turning.” And then you said, “I hope you are equally earnest to find the right way to Heaven!” I had never thought of Divine Truth, Sir, until that evening.” Now, that is a thing any of us might have said, and *ought* to have said under such circumstances, but did we say it?

Let seed unsown be this day steeped in tears of deep regret. The old Covenanters used to tell with joy the story of Mr. Guthrie, who lost his way one night on a moor. His companions went on, and he missed them. When he, at last, rejoined them, having found the way, he showed them that it was a blessed piece of Providence. Said he, “I wandered across the moor till I came to a little cottage where was a sick and dying woman. The priest was just administering to her extreme unction, and when he went out I went in. She was troubled in mind. I told her the Gospel, and she believed in Jesus. I found her in a state of nature, I preached the Gospel to her until I saw her in a state of Grace! And when I came away I left her in a state of Glory!”

Yes, God will make us miss our way that souls may find theirs. He will put us into positions where we may find out His banished ones. He will bring them into contact with His earnest people in ways which will conduce to the saving result. Let us be on the lookout. He who observes his opportunities will find them plentifully given him. God devises for us, and we have but to follow the trail of Providence.

But I must hasten on. Many are brought to repentance and faith by sickness. They have been frivolous in health, but the chamber of affliction has given them time and reasons for meditation. Losses, disappointments, poverty, and all sorts of so-called misfortunes, have worked for the same end. The deaths of others, too—oh, what loud calls have these been—and how frequently have ears been opened to them! In this great city the deaths of little babes are among Heaven’s most important missionary operations. The many who are born only to die—are these wasted lives? Oh, no! Mothers are beckoned to the skies by their departing infants, and fathers, though they may be steeped in indifference to the Gospel, are made to think seriously of the world to come.

You infant cherubs, who in Heaven behold the face of our great Father, how often are you ministers of his that do His pleasure! In this sense, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength. Accidents, storms, fires, wrecks, famines, wars, fevers, plagues, earthquakes, and I know not what beside have all alarmed sinners and driven them to God. Omnipotence finds servants everywhere. Grace is never short of devices. The Lord is wonderful in counsel, fertile in means. The stones of the field and the stars of Heaven are alike in league with Him. The armory of the Gospel is never destitute of suitable weapons! The artillery of Heaven strikes at all ranges, and is never short of ammunition.

In addition to this, one ought to remember that there is going on in these happy times a great work of bringing in the banished in the matter of the early education of the young. It were impossible to overestimate the sacred influences which operate in our Sunday schools and in the homes where godly parents preside. Men cannot quite forget the teachings of a holy fireside. They may somewhat, but not utterly. The seed may lie buried long in dust, but the day will come when under ordained circumstances the hidden life will germinate. A verse of an old familiar hymn may lead the man of eighty to the Savior, though he learned it when a child.

The holy text, which like bread was cast on the waters, shall be found again after many days. I believe in the Holy Spirit, and in His sacred care for Divine Truth. He will not suffer the Word of God to fail. His holy influence, like the rain and the snow, shall not return void to Heaven. It shall water the earth, and make it to bring forth and bud. It is ours to continue blessing youth with holy and godly instruction, and God will crown our efforts to the bringing of His banished ones to Himself.

So, too, with Christian influence. Holy living perfumes the air with Divine Grace. They who serve God in their spheres as servants or masters, as rich or poor, are spreading holy health around them. We are told by chemists of an essence called ozone, which is given off by certain substances, and has in it the most purifying properties. Believers who are full of Grace may be said to give off a sacred ozone in their lives. Not only when we speak, but as we live, if our conversation is ordered aright, our influence is healthful. Our prayers bring down unnumbered blessings, and our consecrated lives become the channels of their communication to the sons of men.

Nor is this all. I believe God not only uses good things, but even evil things, to bring His banished home. Satan sometimes outshoots himself. Goliath has been slain by his own sword. I have seen self-righteous men, callous to the appeals of the Gospel, at last fall into gross sin. And then they have recoiled from themselves, have shuddered at the depravity they have discovered in their hearts. And by the sight of the sin of which they did not before believe themselves to have been capable, they have been driven to the Savior. Sin may thus, through God's Grace, undermine its own dominion.

And so with error. It is a grand thing when error works out its own absurdity, and discovers its own nakedness. I look with great thankfulness to God upon the condition of the Roman Catholic Church now. That infallibility dogma I believe will be, under God, the means of bringing some of His banished ones to see the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Many credulous but intensely sincere persons could go long and far, and scarcely know where they were, thinking that their deadly error was the Truth of God—but this last stage in the blind man's progress has proved too much for them.

The new dogma is too manifest a lie! It smells too strongly of the bottomless pit, and many, I trust, will start back from it. I have conversed but lately with one upon whom it has had that effect—a thorough believer in all the doctrines of the Church of Rome until it came to that, [infallibil-

ity of the pope], and now he sees his ground cut from under him, and I hope very speedily to baptize him as a Believer in Christ Jesus! Though otherwise he would have been a priest to preach falsehood, he will now, I trust, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

You do not know, you cannot tell, what will happen. In the world of mind there are revolutions of the most marvelous kind. The God of miracles has not ceased to do great marvels. It is ours to work and wait, and we shall surely see the salvation of God. Where God is in the field of battle, His infallible strategy turns everything to account against the powers of evil. He can not only unmask His own batteries, which as yet we know not of, but He can take the guns of His enemies and turn them upon themselves. When Truth seems defeated, she is nearest her victory. God is never mistaken. The Lord of Hosts knows nothing of difficulties. He has devised means to bring His banished ones back to Himself, and He will make those means available to His honor and Glory. Songs eternal shall celebrate the wisdom of God which achieved His purposes of love.

II. Secondly, and I am sorry it will be so briefly, OUR SECONDARY BANISHMENTS. Alas, the *people of God* sometimes fall into sin. They grow careless, and they walk at a distance from their best Friend, and then sin prevails against them. But the Lord has provided means for bringing them back from their wandering. "He restores my soul." The Holy Spirit, though grieved, will return, convict His servants, again, of sin, and lead them with weeping and supplication to their Savior. He will turn again the captivity of His people, and heal their backslidings. "Return, you backsliding Ephraim," will yet be heard, and the wanderer will yet say, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

Think of David for a moment. He had mournfully gone aside, and was banished from all consciousness of Divine favor. But the Lord sent His servant Nathan to find him. There could not have been a fitter parable than Nathan told him, and, "You are the man," was just the right word to fix the application. His child also died, and this deepened what Nathan had spoken. The king was led to weep and lament before God as he saw chastisement coming to his house. And though he had sinned grievously, yet he was brought back with tears of repentance to his God. The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away, therefore He devises means that His banished are not expelled from Him.

Take the case of Samson. What an unhappy fall was his! Nothing could have saved him from his degrading lust but his failing strength, and his doleful captivity. The putting out of his eyes, the making him to grind at the mill, the fetters and the prison were all a part of God's means to bring His banished back again. In his shame and degradation Samson had room to see his sin, though he was blind. And in his misery he was made to feel the bitterness of guilt, and to return unto his God. Take another case and a fuller one, that of Peter. Peter denied his Lord. Was it not remarkable that just then the cock should crow? That was part of the heavenly device.

God uses very little things, and works out His designs by them. Even a cock's crowing can break a backslider's heart if the Lord pleases. And then just as the cock crew a second and a third time, the Savior turned

and looked on Peter, and that blessed look of mingled love and rebuke did the work of conviction most thoroughly, for he went out and wept bitterly. Then when Peter was ripe for consolation. The Lord had provided a tender heart to cheer him—for there was John—that dear John so full of love, and we find him with Peter as a companion. Who knows how greatly that companionship helped to put the wanderer right?

Then to crown all, the Master when He addressed the women, said, “Go tell My disciples and Peter.” That special word for Peter completed the heavenly cure. All these were parts of the plan by which Peter was restored and converted from his sin to become again a joyful servant of his blessed Lord. Let us keep away from sin. But if we have fallen into it, let us not despair, for the Lord has devised means that His banished are not expelled from Him.

There is another kind of banishment which is produced not so much by sin primarily as by despondency. There are some true souls whom God loves, who yet do not often enjoy a sunshiny day. They are very dark as to their hope and their joy, and some of them have perhaps, for months, lost the light of God’s countenance. In their complaining moments they are tempted to say, “Lo, these many years do I serve You, and yet You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” Yet, what promises there are for them! The ingenuity of God has revealed itself remarkably in the wording of His promises to suit the conditions of His poor tempest-tossed and downcast people—

***“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”***

How graciously our heavenly Father sends to His afflicted words of good cheer by persons who have passed through similar experiences, and can therefore sympathize with them. If it seems better in His sight He ministers comfort by those of an opposite temperament, whose cheerful way of talking of Jesus chides the disconsolate out of their despair. Giant Despair may get the child of God in the dungeon, and lock the door as fast as he pleases, and nail up the windows, and put iron bars before them—but the Lord knows how to get His children out of the prison after all. The Giant may say, “I shall make an end of them. I have bones in my castle yard of others I have slain, and I will have theirs, also. I will persuade them to use the knife or halter, and get them to put an end to themselves.”

But he does not know that God has hidden in the Christian’s bosom the key called “Promise,” and at last the key shall open the door, and out of Doubting Castle the prisoners shall come, escaping like birds out of the snare of the fowler. I believe the histories of some desponding ones would surprise us could we know them. I have never been able to doubt that almost-miracle related of Mrs. Honeywood by many of the Puritan divines, men of undoubted truthfulness. After many years of despair, she took up a Venice glass, and dashing it to the ground, cried, “It is of no use comforting me, for I am damned as surely as this glass is broken.”

To the amazement of all, it was *not* broken. And though nothing had cheered her for years, she was, if I may so say, confounded into hope. Oh, the stories that desponding souls might tell—of how God has appeared to them at last! Let us be cheered by remembering the Lord’s wonders of old,

for He is the same still. The smoking flax shall yet burst into a joyous flame. The third day He will raise you up, and you shall live in His sight. Israel shall come out of Egypt—with a high hand and an outstretched arm will Jehovah deliver His afflicted. Only look up, quietly wait, and turn your eyes to Calvary's bleeding Savior, and you shall yet find light arise in darkness. The Lord will not leave even the least of His people to perish in despair. His wisdom fails not, nor His love. He shall break the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder, and His chosen shall come forth from the house of bondage.

III. I have thus, as best I could, set forth the abounding goodness of the Great God our Savior, but now there is A PRACTICAL LESSON to be gathered from all this, and I want you to learn it. If God thus brings back His banished, let us bring back ours.

The first application of that rule is this—there may, perhaps, out of so many hundreds of persons here, be someone—a father, a mother, or some other relative, who has been compelled, as he has thought, to deny and no longer to acknowledge a child or a brother. Great offenses have at last brought anger into your bosom, and, as you think, very justifiable anger. I shall not argue the point. I will however say this, God has devised means of bringing back His banished—could not you devise some means to bring back yours?

Oh, could not the lad be tried again? Could not the daughter have another opportunity? Did you tell your brother never to darken your house? Let tomorrow's post bear him an invitation to come and see you again. Do you expect God to forgive you if you forgive not others? Do you think that He to whom you owe ten thousand talents, will excuse you the debt if you take your debtor by the throat who only owes you a hundred pence? Oh, celebrate this day by a full forgiveness of all who have done anything against you! And do not merely say, "Well, I will do it if they will ask me."

That is not what God does, He is first in the matter, and devises *means*. Try. Consider. Devise means. "Would you have me lower myself?" My dear Friend, sometimes to lower ourselves is to make ourselves much higher in God's sight. There is such a thing as bowing down to rise, stooping to conquer. He who is first to put an end to strife is the most honorable of the two. Anything is better than harboring wrath and being revengeful or bitter of spirit. I will say no more, only God grant you may put it in practice if you are in the position described.

The last application of the lesson shall be this—let every Christian devise means for bringing to Jesus those banished ones who surround him. We must, as a Christian Church, be indefatigably industrious in seeking out the Lord's expelled and banished ones who live in our neighborhood. I felt much joy of heart this week, in Liverpool, where I preached to an assembly of fallen women, for I felt as I spoke that the words dropped upon soil made ready to receive it. I hope it was so.

O dear Christian people, if you know of any whom the world casts out, be diligent to bring them in! If society says to them, "We do not know you, you are like lepers and must be set apart," go after them, go after them among the first. The most sick require the physician first. The most fallen most need help. If you feel that you can do the work, I pray you will give

yourself to it with diligence. There is a vast amount of ignorance as well as sin in this city and in all our large towns. I know it is hard to labor among the very ignorant and degraded, but it is to these we ought to go first.

Keep up your Ragged schools. Young men and young women who have a call to such work, persevere in this holy service. You will meet with many difficulties and little apparent success—never mind—you must devise means to bring these banished ones back! Push on with your work. God will bless you. Might not more be done by some of you, by having classes at your houses, classes of young men and young women, or boys and girls? We have not always enough rooms for such purposes, and to build them costs money—are there not many of you who might use your parlors in that way on the Sunday, and do much good at no cost? That may be your means of bringing back God's banished ones.

Or perhaps you have a larger room, and might get up a weekly Prayer Meeting, or hold a little service. There are very many who will never enter our Churches and Chapels who would enter cottages and private houses, if invited. We cannot multiply services too much in this great city. It may not be so in small villages, but here we have awful need and are literally sweltering in sin and ignorance. Devise means for bringing the banished ones back. Think of something suitable for your abilities, and get about it. Is this plan inapplicable? Try another. Cannot you distribute tracts? Could you not write letters to your associates and friends about their souls? How often are those letters blessed! Wisely written and much prayed over, I do not know of a better means for fishing for souls than godly letters. Try the plan.

God devised means to save you. In His hands begin to devise means for saving others. Science and art have their fertile inventors, and shall we fail for lack of a little sanctified common sense? O for planners and plotters who will lay out all their ingenuity in plans for soul-winning. I thank God that there are so many of you doing good, but I would that all of you were. I would that everyone here felt, "I must, while the day lasts, work for my Lord. The night is coming on." I will say thus much—if there is one person here who cannot be excused from working, and does not wish to be, it is the preacher, for oh, I owe my Lord so much! I had so much sin to be forgiven, and it has been forgiven. And I have received so much mercy at His hands, that I would ask, as long as I live, to be devising means for bringing others to my precious Redeemer.

Now, if He has not shown such love to you, you shall be excused. But I know many of you will cry out, "The preacher says he owes much, but we owe quite as much. We are equally in debt to the infinite mercy of God." Then I charge you in the name of Him who was crucified for you! By His precious blood and wounds! By His everlasting love, and by His coming to receive you to Himself, I charge you—"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Amen.

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THE BARLEY FIELD ON FIRE

NO. 563

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 3, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king. But he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come. Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab’s field is near mine and he has barley there. Go and set it on fire. And Absalom’s servants set the field on fire. Then Joab arose and came to Absalom unto his house and said unto him, Why have your servants set my field on fire?”
2 Samuel 14:29-31.

You remember the historical narrative. Absalom had fled from Jerusalem under fear of David’s anger. He was after a time permitted to return, but he was not admitted into the presence of the king. Earnestly desiring to be restored to his former posts of honor and favor, he besought Joab to come to him, intending to request him to act as mediator. Joab, having lost much of his liking for the young prince, refused to come. And though he was sent for repeatedly, he declined to attend to his desire.

Absalom therefore thought of a most wicked but most effective plan of bringing Joab into his company. He bade his servants set Joab’s field of barley on fire. This brought Joab down in high wrath to ask the question, “Why have your servants set my field on fire?” This was all that Absalom wanted—he wished an interview—and he was not scrupulous as to the method by which he obtained it. The burning of the barley field brought Joab into his presence, and Absalom’s ends were accomplished.

Omitting the sin of the deed, we have here a picture of what is often done by our gracious God with the wisest and best design. Often He sends for us, not for His profit, but for ours. He would have us come near to Him and receive a blessing at His hands—but we are foolish and cold-hearted and wicked—and we will not come. He, knowing that we will not come by any other means, sends a serious trial—He sets our barley field on fire, which He has a right to do—seeing our barley fields are far more His than they are ours.

In Absalom’s case it was wrong—in God’s case He has a right to do as He wills with His own. He takes away from us our most choice delight upon which we have set our heart and then we enquire at His hands, “Why do You contend with me? Why am I thus struck with Your rod? What have I done to provoke You to anger?” And thus we are brought into the Presence of God and we receive blessings of infinitely more value than those temporary mercies which the Lord had taken from us.

You will see, then, how I intend to use my text this morning. As the pastor of so large a Church as this, I am constantly brought into contact with all sorts of human sorrow. Frequently it is poverty—poverty, too, which is not brought on by idleness or vice—but *real* poverty. It is most distressing and afflicting poverty, too, because it visits those who have

fought well the battle of life and have struggled hard for years and yet in their old age scarcely know where bread shall come from, except that they rest upon the promise—"Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure."

Messengers come to me sometimes as fast as they came to Job, bearing sad tidings concerning one and another of you. There comes one—"I entreat your prayers for me, Sir. God has been pleased to take away my wife with a stroke. She now lies in the cold grave." Another cries, "O Sir, my wife is sorely sick and the physician says that there is but little hope—pray for her, that she may be strengthened in the hour of her departure, and for me, that I may be enabled to kiss the Master's rod." Then comes another—"My son is afflicted. He is to undergo a painful operation. Pray that the surgeon's knife may not be his death, but that he may be enabled to bear up under it."

And when I have sympathized with a company of sad complaints like these, another set of messengers will be waiting at the door. How few families are long without severe trials—hardly a person escapes for any long season without tribulation. With impartial hand Sorrow knocks at the door of the palace and the cottage. Why all this? The Lord, we know, "Does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" for nothing. Why can it be that He employs so many frowning servants and sends out so often His usher of the black rod? Why can it be?

Perhaps I may be able to give the fitting answer to this very proper enquiry and it may be that I may be as serviceable to the afflicted as the jailer was to Paul and Silas when he washed their stripes. I shall use my text, first of all, in reference to Believers. And then, with regard to the unconverted. O for help from above!

I. First of all, Brethren, let us use the text WITH REFERENCE TO BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. My beloved Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, we cannot expect to avoid tribulation. If other men's barley fields are not burned, ours will be. If the Father uses the rod nowhere else, He will surely make His true children smart. As Paul says and as our hymnster has rhymed it—

***"Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight,
But the true-born child of God
Must not—would not if he might."***

Your Savior has left you a double legacy, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace." You enjoy peace—you must not expect that you shall escape without the privilege of the tribulation. All wheat must be threshed—and God's threshing floor witnesses to the weight of the flail as much as any other. Gold must be tried in the fire—and truly the Lord has a fire in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem. But you, Beloved, have four very special comforts in all your trouble. You have first this sweet reflection that there is no curse in your cross. Christ was made a curse for us and we call His Cross the accursed tree, but truly since Jesus hung upon it, it is most blessed.

And I may now say concerning the cross of affliction, "Blessed is every man who hangs on this tree." The cross may be very heavy, especially while it is green and our shoulders unused to carrying it. But remember,

though there may be a ton-weight of *sorrow* in it, there is not a single ounce of the *curse* in it. God does never punish His children in the sense of avenging justice—He *chastens* as a father does his child—but He does never punish His redeemed as a judge does a criminal.

It were unjust to exact punishment from redeemed souls since Christ has been punished in their place. How shall the Lord punish twice for one offense? If Christ took my sins and stood as my Substitute then there is no wrath of God for me. And though my cup may be bitter, yet there cannot be a single drop of the wormwood of Almighty wrath in it. I may have to smart, but it will never be beneath the lictor's rods of justice, but under the Parent's rod of wisdom. O Christian, how sweet this ought to be to you! There was a time when you were under conviction of sin, when you thought you would rot in a dungeon or burn at the stake most cheerfully if you could but get rid of the sense of God's wrath!

And will you now become impatient? The wrath of God is the thunderbolt which scathes the soul. And now that you are delivered from that tremendous peril you must not be overwhelmed with the few showers and gales which Providence sends you. A God of Love inflicts our sorrows—He is as good when He chastens as when He caresses—there is no more wrath in His afflicting Providences than in His deeds of bounty. God may seem unkind to Unbelief, but Faith can always see love in His heart. Oh, what a mercy that Sinai has ceased to thunder! Lord, let Jesus say what He will so long as Moses is quieted forever! Strike, Lord, if You will, now that You have heard the Savior's plea and justified our souls.

You have, secondly, another ground of comfort, namely, that your troubles are all apportioned to you by Divine Wisdom and Love. As for their number, if He appoints them ten they never can be eleven. As for their weight, He who weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance takes care to measure your troubles—and you shall not have a grain more than His infinite Wisdom sees fit. The devil may seem to be turned loose upon you, but remember he is always a chained enemy. There is a tether to every trouble and beyond that tether it can never stray.

Nebuchadnezzar may heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual, but God's thermometer measures the exact degree of heat and beyond it the flame cannot rage even though a thousand Nebuchadnezzars should swear themselves out of breath in their fury. Consider everything that you have to suffer as the appointment of Wisdom, ruled by Love, and you will rejoice in all your tribulation knowing that it shall reveal to you the loving kindness and wisdom of your God.

You have a third consolation, namely, that under your cross you have many special comforts. There are cordials which God gives to sick saints which He never puts to the lips of those who are in health. Dark caverns keep not back the miners if they know that diamonds are to be found there—you need not fear suffering when you remember what riches it yields to your soul. There is no hearing the nightingale without night and there are some promises which only sing to us in trouble. It is in the cellar of affliction that the good old wine of the kingdom is stored. You shall never see Christ's face so well as when all others turn their backs upon

you. When you have come into such confusion that human wisdom is at a nonplus, then shall you see God's Wisdom manifest and clear!

Oh, the love visits which Christ pays to His people when they are in the prison of their trouble! Then He lays bare His very heart to them and comforts them as a mother does her child. They sleep daintily who have Jesus to make their beds. Suffering saints are generally the most flourishing saints and well they may be, for they are Jesus' special care. If you would find a man whose lips drop with pearls, look for one who has been in the deep waters. We seldom learn much except as it is beaten into us by the rod in Christ's schoolhouse under Madam Trouble. God's vines owe more to the pruning knife than to any other tool in the garden—superfluous shoots are sad spoilers of the vines.

But even while we carry it, the cross brings present comfort. It is a dear, dear cross, all hung with roses and dripping with sweet smelling myrrh. Rutherford seemed at times in doubt which he loved better, Christ or His Cross. But then, good man, he only loved the Cross for his Lord's sake. Humble souls count it a high honor to be thought worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. If ever Heaven is opened at all to the gaze of mortals, the vision is granted to those who dwell in the Patmos of want and trouble. Furnace joys glow quite as warmly as furnace flames. Sweet are the uses of adversity and sweet are its accompaniments when the Lord is with His people—

***“Mid the gloom, the vivid lightning
With increasing brightness plays.
'Mid the thorn-brake beauteous flowers
Look more beautiful and gay.
So, in darkest dispensations,
Does my faithful Lord appear,
With His richest consolations
To reanimate and cheer.”***

But then—and this is the point to which my text brings me and all I have already said is going astray from it—you have this comfort, that your trials work your lasting good by bringing you nearer and nearer to your God. This point we will illustrate by the narrative before us. My dear Friends in Christ Jesus, our heavenly Father often sends for us and we will not come. He sends for us to exercise a more simple faith in Him. We have believed, and by faith we have passed from death unto life. But our faith sometimes staggers—we have not yet reached to Abraham's confidence in God—we do not leave our worldly cares with Him, but like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving.

We have faith to lay hold upon *little* promises, but we are oftentimes afraid to open our mouths wide though God has promised to fill them. He therefore says to us, “Come, My child, come and trust Me. The veil is rent. Enter into My Presence and approach boldly to the Throne of My Grace. I am worthy of your fullest confidence. Cast your cares on Me. Come into the sunlight and read your title clear. Shake yourself from the dust of your cares and put on your beautiful garment of Faith.” But, alas, though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting Grace, we will not come!

At another time He calls us to closer communion with Himself. We have been sitting on the doorstep of God's House and He bids us advance into

the banqueting hall and sup with Him, but we decline the honor. He has admitted us into the inner chambers, but there are secret rooms not yet opened to us. He invites us to enter them, but we hold back. Jesus longs to have near communion with His people. This is that which gives Him, “to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied.” It must be a joy to a Christian to be with Christ—but it is also a joy to Jesus to be with His people, for it is written, “His delights were with the sons of men.”

Now, one would think that if Christ did but beckon with His finger and say to us, “Draw near and commune with Me,” we should fly, as though we had wings on our feet! But, instead, we are cleaving to the dust—we have too much business, we have too many carking cares and we forget to come—though it is our Beloved’s voice which calls us to Himself. Frequently the call is to more fervent *prayer*. Do you not feel in yourself, at certain seasons, an earnest longing for private prayer? You have felt as if you could not be at ease until you could draw near unto God and tell Him your wants.

And yet, maybe you have quenched the Spirit in that respect and still have continued without nearness of access to God. Every day the Lord bids His people come to Him and ask what they will and it shall be done. He is a bounteous God who sits upon the Mercy Seat and He delights to give to His people the largest desires of their hearts. And yet, shame upon us, we live without exercising this power of prayer and we miss the plenitude of blessing which would come out of that cornucopia of Grace-prevailing prayer with God. Ah, Brethren! We are verily guilty here, the most of us. The Master sends for us to pray and we will not come.

Often, too, He calls us to a higher state of *piety*. From this pulpit I have labored to stir you up to nobler attainments. I have besought you to rest no longer satisfied with your dwarfish attainments but to press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Have I not cried unto you, Beloved, and bid you—

**“Forget the steps already trod
And onward urge your way”?**

I am persuaded there are Christians as much in Grace beyond ordinary Christians, as ordinary Christians are beyond the profane. There are heights which common eyes have never seen, much less scaled. Oh, there are nests among the stars where God’s own saints dwell and yet how many of us are content to go creeping along like worms in the dust?

Would that we had Grace to scale the clouds and mount into the pure blue sky of fellowship with Christ! We do not serve God as we should. We are cold as ice when we should be like molten metal burning our way through all opposition. We are like the barren Sahara when we should be blooming like the garden of the Lord. We give to God pence when He deserves pounds! No, deserves our heart’s blood to be joined in the service of His Church and of His Truth. Oh, we are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus, not fit to be His servants, much less to be His brides!

If He had put us in the kitchen to be sweepers I fear we are scarcely fit for the service and yet He has exalted us to be bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, married to Him by a glorious marriage covenant. O, Brethren, God often calls us to higher degrees of piety and yet we will not come! Now, why is it that we permit our Lord to send for us so often, without go-

ing to Him? Let your own heart give the reason in a humble confession of your offenses. O my Brethren, we never thought we should have been so bad as we are!

If an angel had told us that we should be so indifferent towards Christ we should have said, as Hazael did to Elisha, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" If any of us could have seen our own history written out by a Prophet's pen, we should have said, "No, it cannot be. If Christ forgives me I must *love* Him. If He is pleased to make me His own Brother, I must *serve* Him. If I am the recipient of such splendid mercies I must do something commensurate with His bounty." And yet, up to now we have been ungrateful, unbelieving and even refusing to listen to His call, or to come at His bidding. He has said, "Seek My face," and our heart did not say, "Lord, Your face will I seek."

Because of all this, because we will not listen to the gentle call of God, there comes trouble, just as there came the burning of the barley field of Joab because he would not visit the young prince. Trouble comes in all sorts of shapes. Little does it matter what form it comes in, if it does but answer the purpose of making us obey the Divine calling. Some Christians have their trial in the shape of sickness—they drag about with them a diseased body all their lives. Or they are suddenly cast upon the bed of sickness and they toss to and fro by night and by day in pain and weariness. This is God's medicine. And when God's children have it, let them not think it is sent to kill them, but to heal them.

Much medicine which the physician gives makes the man ill for a time—he is worse with it than he would have been without it. But if he is a clever physician he knows that this is the consequence of the medicine and thus he is not at all alarmed by the pain of his patient. He expects that all this will work for good and hunt out, as it were, the original disease. When the Lord sends us sickness, it, for a time perhaps, makes our former spiritual infirmities grow worse, for sickness often provokes impatience and murmuring against God. But in due time our proud spirits will be broken and we shall cry for mercy.

As a file takes off rust, so does sickness frequently remove our deadness of heart. The diamond has much cutting, but its value is increased thereby—and so with the Believer under the visitations of God. I have heard say of many ministers that they preach best after sickness till their people have scarcely regretted all the pains they have felt when they have found how savory and full of marrow have been their words. My Brother, if you will not come to God without it, He will send you a sick bed so that you may be carried on it to Him. If you will not come running, He will make you come limping. If you will not come while your eyes are bright and while your countenance is full of health, He will make you come when your eyes are dull and heavy and your complexion is sickly and sad. But come you must, and if by no other means, sickness shall be the black chariot in which you shall ride.

Losses, too, are frequently the means God uses to fetch home His wandering sheep. Like fierce dogs they worry the wanderers back to the shepherd. There is no making lions tame if they are too well fed. They must be brought down from their great strength and their stomachs must be low-

ered a bit—and then they will submit to the tamer's hand. And often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to his Lord's will by lack of bread and hard labor. When rich and increased in goods, many professors carry their heads much too loftily and speak much too boastfully. Like David, they boast, "My mountain stands fast. It shall never be moved."

When the Christian grows wealthy, is in good repute, has good health and a happy family, he, too, often admits Mr. Carnal Security to feast at his table. If he is a true child of God there is a rod prepared for him. Wait awhile and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate—how soon the acres change hands! There goes a part of his business—no profits will ever come to him again in that direction. That debt yonder—a dishonored bill over there—how fast his losses come, when will they end? Now as these embarrassments come in one after another, he begins to be distressed about them and betakes himself to his God.

Oh, blessed waves that wash the man on the Rock of Salvation! Oh, blessed cords, though they may cut the flesh, if they draw us to Jesus! Losses in business are often sanctified to our soul's enriching. If you will not come to the Lord full-handed, you shall come empty. If God, in His Grace, finds no other means of making you to honor Him among men. If you cannot honor Him on the pinnacle of riches, He will bring you down to the valley of poverty. Bereavements, too! What sharp cuts of the rod we get with these, my Brethren! We know how the Lord sanctifies these to the bringing of His people near to Himself.

How glad we should be to think that Christ Himself once suffered bereavements as we have done. Tacitus tells us that an amber ring was thought to be of no value among the Romans till the emperor took to wearing one and then straightway an amber ring was held in high esteem. Bereavements might be looked upon as very sad things, but when we recollect that Jesus wept over His friend Lazarus, henceforth they are choice jewels and special favors from God! Christ wore this ring—then I must not blush to wear it. Many a mother has been stirred up to a holier life by the death of her infant. Many a husband has been led to give his heart more to Christ by the death of his wife.

Do not departed spirits, like angels, beckon us up to Heaven? "Come, come away," they say, "this is not your rest. I once could build upon the same tree and sing upon the same bough, but now I am taken from you. Now I rest in Heaven! Come here, you who were once my fond mate, come here, for all the trees where you are building are marked for the axe—therefore come now and dwell with me!" Yes, we must look upon our new-made graves in this light and pray the Lord to dig our hearts with the funeral spade and bury our sins as we bury our departed ones.

Trials in your family, in your children, are another form of the burning barley field. I do not know, Brethren, but I think a living cross is much heavier to carry than a dead one. I know some among you who have not lost your children—I could have wished you had for they have lived to be your grief and sorrow. Ah, young Man, better that your mother should have seen you perish in birth than that you should live to disgrace your father's name. Ah, Man, it were better for you that the procession had

gone winding through the streets, bearing your corpse down to the grave, than that you should live to blaspheme your mother's God and laugh at the Book which is her treasure! It were better for you that you had never been born and better for your parents, too.

Ah, but dear Friends, even these are meant to draw us nearer to Christ. We must not make idols of our children and we dare not do it when we see how manifestly God shows us that, like ourselves, they are by nature children of wrath. Sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child, but the venom is turned to medicine in God's hand. God's birds would often keep down in the grass in their nests, but He fills their nests full of thorns and then up they fly and sing as the lark as they mount towards Heaven. You must look upon these family trials as invitations from God—sweet compulsion to make you seek His face.

Many are afflicted in another way, which is perhaps as bad as anything else—by a deep depression of spirit. They are always melancholy. They know not why. There are no stars in the night for them, and the sun gives no light by day. Melancholy has marked them for her own. But even this, I think, is often the means of keeping some of them nearer to God than they would be. You know there are some of our English plants which grow only in damp, moist places under trees. If the sun were to shine in their faces, they would die—perhaps some minds are of the same order. Too many sweets make children sick and bitters are a good tonic. A veil is needed for some delicate complexions, lest the sun look too fiercely on them. It may be these mourners need the veil of sorrow. It is good that they have been afflicted, even with this heavy depression of spirit, because it keeps them near their God.

Then there is that other affliction, the hiding of God's countenance—how hard to bear, but how beneficial! If we will not keep near to our Lord, He is sure to hide His face. You have seen a mother walking out with her little child when it has just learned to walk, and as she goes through the street the little one is for running sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left and so the mother hides herself a moment.

Then the child looks round for the mother and begins to cry *and then* out comes the mother! What is the effect? Why, it will not run away from mother any more. It is sure to keep hold of her hand afterwards. So, when we get to wandering from God, He hides His face and then, since we have a love for Him, we begin crying after Him. And when He shows His face once more, we cling to Him the more lovingly ever afterwards. So the Lord is pleased to bless our troubles to us.

Now, Christian, what about all this? Why, just this. Are you under any sharp trouble now? Then I pray you go to God as Joab went to Absalom—"Why have your servants set my field on fire?" Show me why You contend with me. "Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the Way everlasting." Make this a special season of humbling and heart-searching. Now let every besetting sin be driven out. When God sweeps, you search. When you are under the rod, it is yours to make a full confession of past offenses and pray to be delivered from their power in the future.

Or, have you no trial today, my Brother? Then see if there is not something which may provoke God to send one and begin now to purge yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit by the Holy Spirit. Prevention is better than a cure and sometimes a timely heart-searching may save us many a heart-smarting. Let us see to that, then. Or have we been afflicted and is the affliction over now? Then let us say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." Let us bless God for all that He has done, saying, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Let us join together in one common hymn of praise for all the loving kindness which God has been pleased to show us in the sharp cuts of His rod. I have said enough I think, to the Christian, to work out the little picture before us. God has burned your barley field, dear Friends. Now go to Him and the closer you can approach to Him and the more firmly you can cling to Him, the better for your soul's health and comfort all your life.

At the last, you and I shall sing to the praise of our afflicting God—

***"All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy,
Where, though trials now attend me,
Trials never more annoy.
Blest there with a weight of glory,
Still the path I'll ne'er forget,
But, exulting, cry, it led me
To my blessed Savior's feet."***

II. A few words—God make them mighty—TO THE SINNER shall form the second part of our discourse. God also has sent for you, O unconverted Man! God has often sent for you. Early in your childhood your mother's prayers sought to woo you to a Savior's love and your godly father's first instructions were as so many meshes of the net in which it was desired that you should be taken. But you have broken through all these and lived to sin away early impressions and youthful promises.

Since then you have often been called under the ministry. Our sermons have not been all shots wide of the mark, but sometimes a hot shot has burnt its way into your conscience and you have been made to tremble. But alas, the trembling soon gave way before your old sins. Up to now you have been called, but you have refused. The hands of Mercy have been stretched out and you have not regarded them. You have had calls too, from your Bible, from religious books, from Christian friends.

Holy zeal is not altogether dead and it shows itself by looking after your welfare. Young Man, your shop mate has sometimes spoken to you. Young Woman, your companion has wept over you. There are some of you now present who have been called by the most loving of voices in connection with our classes. Both in our Sunday schools and in the Catechumen classes there are men and women with deep love to the souls of those committed to them—tender hearts, weeping eyes—and you have been wept over that you might come to Christ. But still all the agency that has been employed has been up to this moment without effect. You are a stranger to the God who made you and an enemy to Christ the Savior.

Well, if these gentle means will not do, God will employ other agencies. Perhaps He has tried them already. If not, if He intends in the Divine Decree your eternal salvation, He will, as sure as you are a living man, use

stronger ways with you. And if a word will not do, He will come with a blow, though He loves to try the power of the word first. You too, my Hearer, unconverted and unsaved, have had your trials. You weep as well as Christians. You may not weep for *sin*, but sin shall make you weep. You may abhor repentance because of its sorrow, but you shall not escape *sorrow*, even if you escape repentance.

You have had your sickness—do you not remember it, when in the silent night you heard the watch ticking out, as you thought, your last few minutes and foretelling your doom? Do you remember those weary days when you tossed from side to side and did but shift the place and keep the pain? Man, can you remember your vows which you have lived to break and your promises with which you lied unto the Eternal God? Then the Sunday would be your delight, you said, if you were spared. And the House of God and the people of God should be dear to you and you would seek His face! But you have not done so—you have broken your covenant and have despised your promise made to God!

Or, what is it, have you had losses in business? You began life well and hopefully but nothing has prospered with you. I am not sorry for it, for I remember it is the wicked who spreads himself like a green bay tree, and it is concerning the reprobate that it is written, “There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.”

I am glad that you were plagued. I would sooner see you whipped to Heaven than coached to Hell. Doubtless many go like Agag delicately to their hewing in pieces, while others go sorrowing to eternal Glory. You have had losses—what are these but God’s rough messengers to tell you that there is nothing beneath the sky worth living for? To wean you from the breasts of earth and cause you to look for something more substantial than worldly riches can afford you? And you, too, have lost friends. May I recall those graves, whose turf is yet so newly laid?

May I remind you of children fair and beautiful in your eyes, taken away from you, despite your tears? Shall I remind you of the parent who sleeps in Jesus, of a sweet sister who withered like a lily by early consumption? Shall I bring these thoughts back to you? I would not wish to make your wounds bleed afresh, but it is for your good that I bid you hearken to their solemn voices, for they say to you, “Come to your God! Be reconciled to Him!” I do not think you ever will come to Jesus unless the Holy Spirit shall employ trials to bring you.

I find that the woman never found her piece of money till she swept the house. The prodigal never came back till he was hungry and gladly would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. I only hope that these troubles may be blessed to you! Besides this, you have had your depression of spirit—if I am not mistaken, I address some who are under such depressions now. You do not know why it is, but nothing is pleasant to you. You went to the theater last night. You wished you had not—it gave you no joy. And yet you have been as merry there as any in former times.

You go among your companions and a day’s pleasuring, as they call it, has become to you a very painful waste of time. You have lost the zest of

life and I am not sorry for it if it should make you look for a better life and trust in a world to come. My Friends, again I say—this is the burning of your barley fields. God has sent for you and you would not come and now He has sent messengers who are not so easily refused! He has sent these with sterner and rougher words which speak to your flesh, if your spirit will not listen.

Well now, what then? If God is sending these, are you listening to them? My Hearer, if God has sent these, have you listened to them? There are some of you of whom I almost despair. God can save you, but I cannot tell how He will do it. Certainly the Word does not seem likely to be blessed. You have been called and entreated—early and late we have entreated you. Our hearts have yearned with tenderness for you, but up to now in vain. God knows I have been hammering away at the granite and it has not yet yielded! I have struck the flint and it is not broken. Some of you all but break the plow share—you are such rocks that it seems in vain to plow upon you.

As for trouble, I do not see that that is likely to do you any good—for if you are struck again—you will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick already and the whole heart is faint. You have been beaten, till from the crown of the head to the sole of your feet there is nothing but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores. You are poor—perhaps your drunkenness has made you so. You have lost your wife—perhaps your cruelty helped to kill her. You have lost your children and you are left a penniless, friendless, helpless beggar and yet you will not turn to God! What now is to be done with you?

“O Ephraim, what shall I do with you? Shall I give you up? How can I give you up? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zebaim?” The heart of mercy still yearns after you. Return! Return! God help you to return, even now! Others of you have not suffered all this in the past, but are just now enduring a part of it. Let me entreat you by the mercies of God and by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that you despise not him who speaks unto you. God does not continue to send His messengers forever. After He has labored with you for a time He will leave you to cursing. Long-suffering lasts not forever. Mercy has its day. Behold the King runs up the white flag of comfort today and He invites you to come unto Him.

Tomorrow He may run up the red flag of threats and if that answers not, if that red flag will not make you turn, He will run up the black flag of execution, and then there will be no hope. Beware! The black flag is not run up yet—the red flag is there now in trials and troubles which are God’s threats to you, bidding you open wide your heart that Grace may enter! But if it comes to this, that the red flag fails, the black flag must come. Perhaps it has come! God help you with broken heart to cry unto Him that you may be saved before the candle is blown out and the sun is set and the night of the dead is come on without the hope of another sun rising on a blessed resurrection!

What is the drift of all this? My drift is this. If now a word of mine could make you come to the King this morning—I know it will not unless God the Holy Spirit compels you to do so by His irresistible power—but if He

would bless it, I would rejoice as one who finds great spoil. Why do you stand out against God? If the Lord intends your eternal salvation, your resistance will be in vain and how will you vex yourself in after years to think that you should have stood out so long! Why do you resist? God's battering ram is too mighty for the walls of your prejudice! He will make them fall yet.

Why do you fight against your God, against Him who loves you, who has loved you with an everlasting love and redeemed you by the blood of Christ? Why do you fight against Him who intends to lead your captivity captive and to make you yet His rejoicing child? "Oh," says one, "if I thought there were such mercy as that, I would yield." If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, this shall be an evidence that such mercy is ordained for you! O that the Spirit of God would enable you, Sinner, to come just as you are and put your trust in Christ! If you do so, then it is certain that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life—that you were chosen of God and are precious to Him—and that your head is one on which the crown of immortality is to glitter forever!

O that you would trust Christ! The joy and peace it works in the present is worth worlds, but oh, the Glory, the overwhelming Glory which in worlds to come shall belong to those that trust in Jesus! God grant you Divine Grace this morning to cast your souls upon the finished work of Jesus! His blood can cleanse! His righteousness can cover! His beauty can adorn! His prayer can preserve! His advent shall glorify! His Heaven shall make you blessed!

Trust Him! God help you to trust Him! And He shall have all the praise, both now and forever. Amen and Amen.

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

LOYAL TO THE CORE

NO. 1512

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

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

Although the courage of David appears to have failed him when he fled from his son, Absalom, yet certain other noble characteristics came out in brilliant relief and among the rest, his large-heartedness and his thoughtfulness for others. A man in such a desperate condition as he was, must have earnestly coveted many friends and have been anxious to retain them all, but yet he would not exact their services if they were too costly to themselves. And so he said to Ittai, who appears to have been a Philistine—a proselyte to Israel who had lately come to join David—“Why are you also going with us? You have newly come to me and should I make you wander with me in my sorrows? Return to your place and abide with the new king, for you are a stranger and an exile. May every blessing be upon you. May mercy and truth be with you.”

He did not send him away because he doubted him, but because he felt that he had no claim to the great sacrifices which Ittai might have to make in attending his checkered fortunes. “I do not know what may become of me,” he seems to say, “and I do not want to drag you down with me should my cause become desperate. I have no wish to involve you in it and, therefore, with the best of motives I bid you farewell.” I admire this generosity of spirit. Some men have great expectations—they live upon their friends and yet complain that charity is cold. These people expect more from their friends than they ought to give. A man’s best friends on earth ought to be his own strong arms! Loafers are parasitical plants—they have no root of their own—and like the mistletoe they strike root into some other tree and suck the very soul out of it for their own nourishment.

Sad that men should ever degrade themselves to such despicable meanness! While you can help yourselves, do so, and while you have a right to expect help in times of dire necessity, do not be everlastingly expecting everybody else to be waiting upon you. Feel as David did towards Ittai—that you would, by no means, wish for services to which you have no claim. Independence of spirit used to be characteristic of Englishmen. I hope it will always continue to be so and especially among children of God. On the other hand, look at Ittai, perfectly free to go, but in order to end the controversy once and for all and to make David know that he will not leave him, he takes a solemn oath before Jehovah, his God, and he doubles it by swearing by the life of David that he will never leave him—in life, in death—he will be with David.

He has cast in his lot with him for better and for worse and he means to be faithful to the end. Old Master Trapp says, "All faithful friends went on a pilgrimage years ago and none of them have ever come back." I scarcely believe that, but I am afraid that friends quite so faithful as Ittai are as scarce as two moons in the sky at once and you might travel over the edge of the world before you found them! I think, however, that one reason why faithful friends as Ittai have become so scarce may be because large-hearted Davids are so rare. When you tell a man that you expect a good deal of him, he does not see it. Why should you look for so much? He is not your debtor. You have closed, at once, the valves of his generosity.

But when you tell him honestly that you do not expect more than is right and that you do not wish to be a tax upon him—when he sees that you consider his welfare more than your own—that is the very reason why he feels attached to you and counts it a pleasure to serve such a generous-hearted man. You will generally find that when two people fall out of friendship, there are faults on both sides. If generous spirits are few, it may be because faithful friends are rare and if faithful friends are scarce, it may be because generous spirits are scarce, too. Be it ours, as Christians, to live to *serve* rather than to *be served*, remembering that we are the followers of a Master who said, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." We are not to expect others to serve us, but our life is to be spent in endeavoring to serve them.

I am going to use Ittai's language for a further purpose. If Ittai, charmed with David's person and character, though a foreigner and a stranger, felt that he could enlist beneath David's banner for life—yes—and declared that he would do so then and there. If Ittai could do this, how much more may you and I, if we know what *Christ* has done for us and who He is and what He deserves at our hands—how much more at this good hour should we pledge our fidelity to Him and vow, "As the Lord lives, surely in whatever place my Lord and Savior shall be, whether in death or life, even there, also, shall His servant be"?

And so I shall begin by noticing, first, in what form this declaration was made so that we may learn from it how to make the same declaration.

I. In what form and manner was this declaration made? It was made, first, at a time when David's fortunes were at their lowest ebb and, consequently, it was made unselfishly, without the slightest idea of gain from it. David was now forsaken of everybody. His faithful bodyguard was all that he had on earth to depend upon and then it was that Ittai cast in his lot with David. Now, Beloved, it is very easy to follow religion when she goes abroad in her silver slippers, but the true man follows her when she is in rags and goes through the mire and the slough. To take up with Christ when everybody cries up His name is what a hypocrite would do—but to take up with Christ when they are shouting, "Away with Him! Away with Him!" is another matter.

There are times in which the simple faith of Christ is at a great discount. At one time, imposing ceremonies are all the rage and everybody loves decorated worship. Then the pure simplicity of the Gospel is overloaded and encumbered with meretricious ornaments—it is in such a sea-

son that we must stand out for God's more simple plan and reject the symbolism which verges on idolatry and hides the simplicity of the Gospel. At another time the Gospel is assailed by learned criticisms and by insinuations against the authenticity and Inspiration of the books of Scripture, while fundamental doctrines are undermined, one by one, and he who keeps to the old faith is said to be behind the age and so on.

But happy is that man who takes up with Christ and with the Gospel and with the Truth of God when it is in its worst estate, crying, "If this is foolery, I am a fool, for where Christ is, there will I be! I love Him better at His worst than others at their best and even if He is dead and buried in a sepulcher, I will go with Mary and with Magdalene and sit over against the sepulcher and watch until He rises again, for rise again He will! But whether He lives or dies, where He is there shall His servant be." Ho, then, brave spirits! Will you enlist for Christ when His banner is tattered? Will you enlist under Him when His armor is stained with blood? Will you rally to Him even when they report Him slain? Happy shall you be! Your loyalty shall be proven to your own eternal glory! You are soldiers such as He loves to honor!

Ittai gave himself up wholly to David when he was but newly come to him. David said, "Whereas you came but yesterday, should I, this day, make you go up and down with us?" But Ittai does not care whether he came yesterday or 20 years ago—he declares, "Surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there, also, will your servant be." It is best to begin the Christian life with thorough consecration. Have any of you professed to be Christians and have you never given yourselves entirely to Christ? It is time that you began again! This should be one of the earliest forms of our worship of our Master—this total resignation of ourselves to Him.

According to His Word, the first announcement of our faith should be by Baptism and the meaning of Baptism, or immersion in water, is death, burial and resurrection. As far as this point is concerned, the pledge is this—"I am henceforth dead to all but Christ, whose servant I now am. Therefore let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The watermark is on me from head to foot. I have been buried with Him in Baptism unto death to show that I belong to Him." Now, whether you have been baptized or not, I leave to yourselves. But in any case, this must be true—that from now on you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. As soon as Christ is yours you ought to be Christ's. "I am my Beloved's" should be linked with, "My Beloved is mine," in the dawn of the day in which you yield to the Lord.

Again, Ittai surrendered himself to David in the most voluntary manner. No one forced Ittai to do this. In fact, David seems to have tried to persuade him the other way. David tested and tried him, but he voluntarily, out of the fullness of his heart said, "Where, my lord, the king, is, there, also, shall his servant be." Now, dear young people, if you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is yours, give yourselves up to Him by a distinct act and deed. Feel that one grand impulse without needing pressure or argument—"The love of Christ constrains me"—but do not wait to have

your duty urged upon you, for the more free the dedication, the more acceptable it will be.

I am told that there is no wine so delicious as that which flows from the grape at the first gentle pressure. The longer you squeeze, the harsher is the juice. We do not like that service which is pressed out of a man and certainly the Lord of Love will not accept forced labor! No, let your willingness show itself. Say—

***“Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.”***

My heart pants after the service of her Lord! With the same spontaneity which Ittai displayed, make a solemn consecration of yourselves to David’s Lord. I used a word, then, which suggests another point, namely, that Ittai did this very solemnly. He took an oath which we Christians may not do and may not wish to do, but still we should make the surrender with quite as much solemnity.

In Dr. Doddridge’s, “Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,” there is a very solemn form of consecration which he recommends young men to sign when they give themselves to Christ. I cannot say that I can recommend it, though I practiced it, for I fear that there is something of legality about it and that it may bring the soul into bondage. I have known some write out a deed of dedication to Christ and sign it with their blood. I will neither commend nor censure, but I will say that a complete dedication must be made in some manner and that it should be done deliberately and with grave thought. You have been bought with a price and you should, therefore, in a distinct manner, acknowledge your Lord’s property in you and transfer to Him the title deeds of your body, spirit and soul.

And this, I think, Ittai did publicly. At any rate, he so acted that everybody saw him when David said, “Go over,” and he marched in front—the first man to pass the brook. Oh yes, dear Friend, you must publicly acknowledge yourself a Christian! If you are a Christian, you must not try to sneak to Heaven round the back alleys, but march up the narrow way like a man and like your Master. He was never ashamed of you, though He might have been! How can you be ashamed of Him when there is nothing in Him to be ashamed of? Some Christians seem to think that they shall lead an easier life if they never make a profession. Like a rat behind the wainscot, they come out after candlelight and get a crumb and then slip back again.

I would not lead such a life! Surely, there is nothing to be ashamed of. A Christian—let us glory in the name! A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—let them write it on our door plates if they will. Why should we blush at that? “But,” says one, “I would rather be a very quiet one.” I will now place a torpedo under this cowardly quietness! What says the Lord Jesus? “Whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven; but he that shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven.” Take up your cross and follow Him, for, “with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

When our Master ascended up on high He told us to preach the Gospel to every creature. And how did He put it? “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There must be, therefore, the believing and the *acknowledgment* of believing. “But cannot I be saved as a believer if I do not openly confess Christ?” Dear Friend, you have no business to tamper with your Master’s command and then say, “Will He not graciously forgive this omission?” Do not neglect one of the two commands, but obey *all* His will. If you have the spirit of Ittai you will say, “Wherever my lord the king is, there, also, shall your servant be.”

I leave the matter with the consciences of those who may be like Nicodemus, coming to Jesus by night, or may be like Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. May they come out and acknowledge their Master, believing that, then, He will acknowledge them!

II. Secondly, what did this declaration involve? As to Ittai, what did it involve? First, that he was, from that day on, to be David’s servant. Of course, as his soldier, he was to fight for him and to do his bidding. What do you say, man? Can you lift your hands to Christ and say, “From this day on I will live as Your servant, not doing my own will, but Your will. Your command is, from now on, my rule”? Can you say that? If not, do not mock Him, but stand back! May the Holy Spirit give you Grace to begin thus and to persevere to end.

It involved, next, for Ittai that he was to do his utmost for David’s cause, not to be his servant in name, but his soldier—ready for scars and wounds and death, if need be, on the king’s behalf. That is what Ittai meant in rough soldier talk. He took the solemn oath that it should be so. Now, if you would be Christ’s disciple, determine, by His Grace, that you will defend His cause—that if there is rough fighting, you will be in it and, if there is a forlorn hope needed, you will lead it and go through floods and flames if your Master’s cause shall call you. Blessed is the man who will follow the Lamb wherever He goes, giving himself wholly up to his Lord, to serve Him with all his heart.

But Ittai, in his promise, declared that he would give a personal attendance upon the person of his master. That was, indeed, the pith of it, “In what place my lord, the king, shall be, even *there*, also, will your servant be.” Brothers and Sisters, let us make the same resolve in our hearts that wherever Christ is, there we will be! Where is Christ? In Heaven. We will be there, by-and-by. Where is He here, *spiritually*? Answer—in His Church. The Church is a body of faithful men and where these are met together, there is Jesus in the midst of them. Very well, then, we will join the Church, for wherever our Lord, the King, is, there, also, shall His servants be!

When the list of the redeemed is read, we will be found in the register, for our Lord’s name is there! Where else did Jesus go? In the commencement of His ministry He descended into the waters of Baptism. Let us follow the Lamb wherever He goes. At the close of His ministry He broke bread and said, “This do you in remembrance of Me.” Be often at His table, for if there is a place on earth where He manifests Himself to His chil-

dren, it is where bread is broken in His name! Let me now tell a secret. Some of you may have heard it before, but you have forgotten it. Here it is—my Lord is generally here at Prayer Meetings on Monday nights and, indeed, whenever His people come together for prayer, there He is! So I will read you my text and see whether you will come up to it—“Surely in what place my Lord the King shall be, whether it be in a Prayer Meeting or at a sermon, even there, also, will Your servant be.”

If you love your Lord, you know where His haunts are—take care that you follow hard after Him! Where is the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, Brethren, He is wherever the Truth of God is and I pray God that He may raise up a race of men and women in England who are determined to be wherever the Truth of God is, also! We have a host of spineless creatures about who will always be where the congregation is the most respectable—respectability being measured by clothes and cash! Time was, in the Church of God, when they most esteemed the most pious men! Has it come to this, that gold takes precedence over Grace?

Our fathers considered whether a ministry was sound, but now the question is—is the preacher clever? Words are preferred to the Truth of God and oratory takes the lead of the Gospel! Shame on such an age! O you who have not altogether sold your birthrights, I charge you keep out of this wretched declension! The man who loves Christ thoroughly will say, “Wherever the Lord, the King, is, there also shall His servant be, if it be with half a dozen poor Baptists or Methodists, or among the most despised people in the town.” I charge you, Beloved, in whatever town or country your lot is cast, be true to your colors and never forsake your principles! Wherever the Truth of God is, go there! And where there is anything contrary to the Truth of God, do not go, for there your Master is not to be found!

What next? Well, our Master is to be found wherever there is anything to be done for the good of our fellow men. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be found wherever there is work to be done in seeking after His lost sheep. Some people say that they have very little communion with Christ and when I look at them, I do not wonder. Two persons cannot walk together if they will not walk at the same pace. Now, my Lord walks an earnest pace whenever He goes through the world, for the King’s business requires haste. And if His disciples crawl, after a snail’s fashion, they will lose His company. If some of our groaning Brethren would go to the Sunday school and there begin to look after the little children, they would meet with their Lord who used to say, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me.”

If others were to get together a little meeting and teach the ignorant, they would there find Him who had compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way. Our Master is where there are fetters to be broken, burdens to be removed and hearts to be comforted! And if you wish to stay with Him, you must aid in such service. Where is our Master? Well, He is always on the side of truth and right. And, O, you Christian people, mind that in everything—politics, business and everything—you keep to that which is right, not to that which is *popular*. Do not bow the knee to that which, for a little day may be cried up, but stand fast in that

which is consistent with rectitude, with humanity, with the cause and honor of God and with the freedom and progress of men! It can never be wise to do wrong. It can never be foolish to be right. It can never be according to the mind of Christ to tyrannize and to oppress.

Keep always to whatever things are pure and lovely and of good report and you will stay with Christ. Temperance, purity, justice—these are favorites with Him! Do your best to advance them for His sake. Above all, remember how Jesus loved secret prayer and if you resolve to stay with Him, you must be much at the Throne of Grace. I will not detain you over each of these points, but simply say that Ittai's declaration meant also this—that he intended to share David's condition. If David were great, Ittai would rejoice. If David were exiled, Ittai would attend his wanderings. Our point must be to resolve, in God's strength, to stay with Christ in all weathers and in all companies and that, whether in life or death!

Ah, that word, "death," makes it sweet, because then we reap the blessed result of having lived with Christ! We shall go upstairs for the last time and bid good-bye to all and then we shall feel that in death He is still with us as in life we have been with Him. Though our good works can never be a ground of confidence when we are dying, yet if the Lord enables us to follow the Lamb wherever He goes and so to lead a decided, positive, downright, upright Christian life, our death pillow will not be stuffed with thorns of regret, but we shall have to bless God that we bore a faithful witness as far as were able to do so. In such a case we shall not, when dying, wish to go back to rectify the mistakes and insincerities of our lives. No, Beloved, it will be very, very sweet to be alone with Jesus in death!

He will make all our bed in our sickness. He will make our dying pillow soft and our soul shall vanish, kissed away by His dear lips. And we shall be with Him forever and forever. Of those that are nearest to Him, it is said, "These are they that follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy." I conclude with this observation. Will our Lord Jesus Christ accept at our hands, tonight, such a consecrating word? If we are trusting in Him for salvation, will He permit us to say that we will stay with Him as long as we live? We reply, He will *not* permit us to say it in our *own strength!*

There was a young man who said, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go," but Christ gave him a cool reception And there was an older man who said, "Though all men shall forsake You, yet I will not," and in reply his Master prayed for him that his faith should not fail. Now, you must not promise as Peter did, or you will make a *greater* failure. But, Beloved, this self-devotion is what Christ *expects* of us if we are His disciples. He will not have us love father or mother more than we love Him! We must be ready to give up all for His sake! This is not only what our Master expects from us, but what He *deserves* from us—

***"Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."***

This, also, is what the Lord will help us to do, for He will give us Grace if we will but seek it at His hands. And this it is which He will graciously reward and has *already* rewarded, in those choice Words of His in the 12th

chapter of John, where He says of His disciples in the 26th verse, "If any man serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor."

Oh, to be honored of God in eternity when He shall say, "Stand back, angels! Make way, seraphim and cherubim! Here comes a man that suffered for the sake of My dear Son. Here comes one that was not ashamed of My Only-Begotten when His face was smeared with spit. Here comes one that stood in the pillory with Jesus and was called ill names for His sake. Stand back, you angels! These have greater honor than you!" Surely the angels of Heaven, as they traverse the streets of gold and meet the martyrs, will ask them about their sufferings and say, "You are more favored than we, for you have had the privilege of suffering and dying for the Lord."

O Brothers and Sisters, snatch at the privilege of living for Jesus! Consecrate yourselves this day unto Him! Live from this hour forward not to enrich yourselves, nor to gain honor and esteem, but for Jesus, for Jesus alone! Oh, if only I could set Him before you here! If only I could cause Him to stand on this platform just as He came from Gethsemane with His bloody sweat about Him, or as He came down from the Cross with wounds so bright with Glory and so fresh with bleeding out our redemption, I think I would hear you say, each one of you, "Lord Jesus, we are Yours and in what place You shall be, whether in death or life, even there, also, will Your servants be."

So may the Lord help us by His most gracious Spirit who has worked all our works in us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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

FOLLOWING CHRIST

NO. 3504

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 1916.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1889.**

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

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

But there is one Man more than man, whose attracting influence is greater than that of all men put together! In the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see gentleness, meekness and most tender affection—and we see the most hearty sympathy with everything that belongs to manhood. Such a vast heart has the Master, such boundless, disinterested affection, such human sympathy—so near is He to everyone of us in His life and in His experiences, that He attracts the sons of men to Himself—and when He is lifted up, He draws men unto Him and afterwards, by the cords of His love, He draws them unto Himself. It is in the hope that some here may feel the sweet attractions of Christ that I have selected this text, anxiously praying that some here may so give themselves to Christ as never to leave Him—and that others who have already done so, may be confirmed in their solemn resolution that in whatever place their Master, the Son of David, the King, shall be, there, also, will they be as His servants—whether in life or in death!

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

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

Let me say, in opening up this assertion, *that Jesus deserves* of all who have really tasted of His Grace *such faithful service*, such unswerving following in all cases and under all circumstances. Who else has ever done for us what Jesus has? Our mother brought us forth, but He has given to us a second birth. Our mother candled us upon her knee, but He has borne us all the days of old and even to gray hairs will He carry His people. We have had many kindnesses from friends, but never such love as Jesus showed when, we being His enemies, He yet redeemed us with His most precious blood. Think of these three words, and try to measure what they mean—Gethsemane—Gabbatha—Golgotha. Let those three words awaken your adoring memories. Gethsemane—with its garden and bloody sweat for you. Gabbatha—with its scourging, its mocking, its shame and spitting for you. Golgotha—with its Cross and the five flowing wounds, and all the bitterness of the Divine Wrath, and the torment of death, itself, for you. Men have been known to give away their lives cheerfully for some great military leader whose genius has commanded their admiration, but they were fools to throw their lives away, after all, for these men had done but little or nothing for them to make them their servants and slaves. But this Man, my Brothers and Sisters, if we had a thousand lives, and were to give them all, yet would deserve more of us, for He has redeemed us from going down into the Pit, saved us from flames that never shall be quenched, and from a pit that is darkness itself! By the eternal woe from which the blood of Christ has lifted us, let us, who believe that we have been redeemed from Hell, consecrate ourselves forever to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. His Cross is despised—let us be despised with it, for He bore shame for us! His Truth is counted a lie—let us be willing to be regarded as liars, for He had reproach cast on Him. Sometimes, to defend His cause has required the loss of all things—be it ours, if necessary, to lose all things for Him who gave up all—and what an all that was—the bliss of Heaven and life, itself, for us, that He might redeem our souls! The deserts of Jesus are such that it would need an angel's tongue to tell them out, even though it were but in brief catalog. Look at Him in what He is, Himself, as His Father's Darling. Look at His Character—was there ever such another? Survey the beauties of His Person—were there ever such charms commingled before? Think of His life and of His death, and of what He is still doing before the Throne of God, and surely you will feel that it is but right and just that, with Jesus, you should enter into the ship and, with Him, sail the ocean over, be it rough or be it smooth.

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, *to keep close to Jesus Christ is right*. It is, in itself, to keep close to integrity, for the Lord Jesus never stepped

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

And, my Brethren, there is another argument why we should cleave to Jesus, and it is this—*why should we leave Him?* Can anybody suggest a reason why the lover of Christ should turn from Him? Polycarp was asked to curse Christ, and he replied, “Why should I curse Him?” The assembly in the amphitheatre could give no answer to that—all Hell could never give a reply to that! What has He done, what has He done that we should leave Him? What can He have done, and what is there that the world can offer that would ever repay us for leaving Him? Could we prove so false, so traitorous, as to turn away from Christ—what would we gain? A little pleasure, gone in a moment, like thorns that crackle beneath the pot. What would we lose, my Brothers and Sisters? We would lose the joy of life! We would lose our support in tribulation! We would lose our hope in death! We would lose Heaven—to inherit nothing but the blackness of darkness forever! I cannot conceive a bribe heavy enough to weigh against Him. I cannot imagine an honor bright enough to compare with Him. I cannot conceive a disgrace that can be black enough to compare with the disgrace of deserting Him. The silver mine of Demas is a poor reward for selling his Master. All the wealth of India, could it be poured into one’s lap, were but a mockery of a soul that damned itself by casting away its confidence in Christ! To whom would we go, Master? To whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. To leave Christ would be the meanest thing of which any could be capable! I suppose the devil, himself, with all that he has ever done, has never been able to compass a wickedness that would equal the wickedness, if it were possible, of a truly gracious soul deliberately deserting Jesus for the world—for such a soul knows the hollowness of this world’s joys! Such a soul knows something of the sweetness of Jesus! Such a spirit has been with Him, has learned of Him, has had the enlightenments of His Grace, has learned the faithfulness of His promise and the love of His heart. Oh, could such a thing be? Could the Lord’s Grace so utterly leave a Believer that he

should turn out an apostate, after all? There is need to dig another Hell, as much lower than Hell as Hell is lower than the earth! There is need to kindle yet more furious flames—seven times hotter might the furnace be heated for such an apostate! Glory be to God, it shall not be—

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

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

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

Ah, young Brother, you today can sing, as others did—

“’Tis done, the great transaction’s done”

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

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

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

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

you have, at least, the trial of cruel mocking. Bear up manfully and meet their mockery with your holy bravery and patient endurance.

And you will have, probably, a worse trial than that, and that is to see those who professed to go with you, as you thought, turn aside. Oh, to young Christians, this is very staggering. Those of us who are older feel this to be a very peculiar cross in church life, to be associated with those who are cold-hearted and dead while they profess to be Christians, who, after all, before long betray their hypocrisy. But to young people it seems often almost staggering. If such a man is not a good man, who can be? Is there anything at all in religion if such a man, after all, should turn out to be a deceiver? Oh, but, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you love Christ, you will not turn aside because some of His friends have forsaken Him, for a true friend then sticks closer. Like this good man, Ittai, of whom we are speaking, you will say, "I never thrust myself on David before. I kept in the background, but now that this rascal Ahithopel has left him, I will go now and offer him my kind and affectionate greetings." It ought always to make you who love Christ become bolder when these villains turn aside, for now you should say that it behooves every honest man to play the man and come to his Friend. If these turn tail, then should the true-hearted lead the van for Christ and for His Truth, and if it should even come to pass that a standard-bearer should desert his flag, spring forward, young man, and grasp it in the place of him, but never because of that turn aside from your Lord!

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

You may expect to have great depression of spirit within. Some of us know what this is very, very frequently. There are times when the joy of religion is gone, our soul is in the dark and yet is feeling after God, blessed be His name. But this is the pinch—to believe in an angry Christ, to hold to His hand and never let Him go, though that hand should seem to pull itself away—to lodge with Christ when He gives you no supper, to go and sleep in Christ's bed when He has not made it, but left it hard for you, to say, "With my desire have I desired You in the night, and with my

spirit will I seek You early.” May you have faith like that faith, that will not, under any difficulties, turn aside from Christ!

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

III. THIS RESOLUTION MAY BE CARRIED OUT.

What I have said might tempt you to declare that you would not try it, but it may be carried out. There are thousands, tens of thousands upon earth who have been with Jesus wherever He has been throughout the whole of their lives, and will be with Him in death, and after death. And there are millions—there they stand—wearing their white robes and waving their palms. Listen! You may almost hear their song. These are they that overcame. They endured unto the end. They came through great tribulation and washed their robes in the Lamb’s blood and, therefore, are they before the Throne of God! What was done in them, may be done in you!

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

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

Now, subject to the power of the Holy Spirit, the way to accomplish our resolve to be with Christ as His servants forever, is, first of all, to *be much in prayer*. If you cannot persevere with God, you are not likely to persevere in contest with man. More prayer, Beloved, many of you need. As your temptations grow, let your prayers become more intense and full of fire—and conquer Hell by assaulting Heaven. You shall prevail against all temptations if you can prevail with God.

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

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

faith to catch its barbed shaft and quench its barbarous flame. God grant you Grace to walk carefully and humbly with your God.

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

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

Understand me, for here it is that I wish to appeal to Believers in Christ. This man Ittai said, “Surely in what place that my lord the king shall be, whether in death or in life, even there, also, your servant will be.” You can follow Christ in a general way in the activities of Christian life, and so on, but there is a peculiar way of following Him. You can get, by God’s Grace, very near your Master and, by still greater Grace, you can keep near to Him and keep near to Him all your lives. I have never been able to hope for perfection in the flesh, but I believe that every Christian ought to strain after even perfection itself. I am afraid we have fixed the standard of what a Christian may be a deal too low—of what a Christian should be it would not be possible to fix the standard too high! It is not necessary for a Christian to be sometimes with Christ and sometimes to lose fellowship. It is not necessary for a Christian to be full of doubts and fears. I met an elderly Christian some years ago who is now in Heaven, whose word I could certainly never dare to have doubted, who told me that by the space of 40 years he had never had a doubt of his own acceptance in the Beloved, and though he had had many troubles and trials, he did not know that his communion with Christ had once been interrupted. I marveled at him, but I marveled a great deal more at myself that I had not tried to get into the same place. Why not? If you are straitened, it certainly is not in your God—you are straitened in your own heart. He never gave you legitimate cause to doubt Him nor did He ever give you a reasonable excuse for forsaking fellowship with Him. Let us, oh, let us aim at keeping as near to Jesus as John did, and not, like Peter, follow afar off! Let it be the great prayer of our lives—

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

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

But oh, dear Friends, there are some here to whom all this talk is nothing for they have never taken up the Cross of King Jesus at all. Do you know it is very seldom I come into this pulpit, very seldom, indeed, without my seeing here and there that mournful color which indicates that another person has departed this life? We are so numerous that there are two or three deaths every week, and sometimes five or six, and as I happen to know when each one is taken away, I am continually reminded of the mortality of my congregation—never twice alike—never under any circumstances—always some here that will never be here, again, or were not here before! And there are always some here who are just on the brink of the grave. Now I speak to you tonight who may, though you know it not, be on the brink of the grave, and I shall ask you to put this question to yourselves—How will it fare with you when you pass into the spirit-world and stand before your God when you are not reckoned as a friend of Christ, but have to take your stand among His enemies? You would not wish to take that place even tonight. You are halting between two opinions, but my dear Friend, that halting of yours must come to an end very soon or otherwise death will decide it—and where death finds you, judgment will leave you—and Hell will continue you.

Oh, I pray you lay hold on eternal life and this night cast in your lot with Christ! Oh, He is the brightest Leader ever a soldier has had! He is the fairest Prince under whom anyone could serve. His cause is such as will ennoble you. To fight under His banner makes each private soldier into a prince, ennobles each one into a king! Before you can serve Him, remember you must be washed by Him. There is a fountain filled with blood—if you can trust Him, that blood will make you white as snow! If you can trust Him now, His Holy Spirit will give you Grace to enlist in His army and to continue a faithful soldier until you shall lay down your battle with your life and cease at once to fight and live—and enter into the victory forever and ever! By the horror of Christ's defeated foes, among whom I would not have you numbered! By the glory of Christ's victorious friends, among whom I would gladly see you muster, look unto Christ and live tonight, and may He help you to do so! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 106.**

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD, O give thanks unto the LORD: for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.* In this Psalm we have the history of God's people turned to practical account. I have heard of some very unwise persons who have said, "I do not care about the histories of Scripture. I do not profit by them." Tell me, dear Friends, what other Bible had David but the history—the first five books? And what more wonderful teaching can there be than is contained in this Psalm, which is the essence of the history, "Praise you the Lord."

2-5. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can show forth all His praise? Blessed are they who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times. Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that You have unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation: That I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.* If I may fare as God's people fared, I will be well content, and if God, Himself, will come and bring me salvation, I shall have all that I need! Is that your thought now, dear Hearer? Then utter the prayer and may the Lord answer it while you are yet in your seat!

6. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.* Three times is the confession of sin here made. It is a good beginning when we can begin with confessing sin. I wish that some people had begun there, when they took up with religion, but they too often jump into it—and I am afraid that they will jump out of it again. That harvest which does not come of plowing is one which will never fill a

barn—and that salvation which does not come from a sense of sin will never come to much.

7. *Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.* They saw them. They were surprised by them, but they could not make them out, could not tell what God was doing when He smote the Egyptians. A lack of understanding of Divine Truth is a very fatal lack.

7. *They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies.* What we do not understand we soon forget.

7. *But provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* They had not been long out of Egypt—they had scarcely eaten the bread that they brought out of their ovens—but they began to doubt God. “They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.”

8. *Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known.* He could not save them for their sake, but He saved them for His own name’s sake.

9. *He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up: so He led them through depths, as through the wilderness.* The bottom of the sea was made as dry and as easy for their feet as the plains of the wilderness, and God led them through.

10-12. *And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words: they sang His praise.* It is almost a sarcasm. They believed when they saw! When the promise was fulfilled, then they believed it. Ah, my dear Hearers, are there not some of you of whom the same might be said—I mean some people of God? You believe as far as you can see, but that is not believing at all! Let us trust God, Red Sea or no Red Sea! Let us believe the promise of God, and make sure that it will be true. Then believed they His words—they sung His praise.

13. *They soon forgot His works.* They were in a hurry to forget.

13-15. *They waited not for His counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.* They had quail to eat. They had the food that they begged for, but their hearts were starved—their souls were famished. Ah, me, what people they were!

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron, the saint of the LORD.* They began to pick holes in their character. Good men that lived for them and were ready to die for them—they began to spit upon them.

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

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

21-23. *They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea. Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.* They had found fault with Moses, yet Moses stood forward as intercessor—and through his pleading their lives were preserved! You see, again, what a sinful people they were. Ah, indeed they were! Look in this mirror and see yourself.

24, 25. *Yes. they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word: But murmured in their tents, and harkened not unto the voice of the LORD.* This murmuring in your tents is a very obnoxious thing to God. Always grumbling and complaining. “It is an Englishman’s privilege,” says one! Mind it does not turn out to be an Englishman’s ruin, for God cannot endure that we should be always murmuring at His Providence!

26-28. *Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal of Peor, and ate the sacrifice of the dead.* They tried to practice necromancy—to have communion with spirits—they tried to learn the dark science and the black art. And this, also, God abhors.

29, 30. *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.* In his hot zeal, he ran a spear through two who were rebelling against God. He did it with all his might, and sometimes it is a kindness to a people to deal severely with them. Sin is not to be treated with white kid gloves. It has to be dealt with, sometimes, with a mailed hand. Phineas did this.

31, 32. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore. They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes. Poor Moses who loved them, and lived with them, yet lost his temper.*

33. *Because they provoked His Spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips* What a people to have to do with! Who would wish to be Moses? And who would wish to be a minister?

34, 35. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. They did not keep themselves separate. They would go and join this lot and that lot. They mingled among the heathen and learned their works.*

36-39. *And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. “What a dreadful people,” you say. These were God’s chosen people, Israel—the best people in the world at that time—and yet how could they be much worse? Oh, what a God of mercy God is to deal with such people at all!*

40-43. *Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen: and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Listen to this!*

44, 45. *Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry: And He remembered for them His Covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies. You would have thought that He would have been provoked beyond endurance, but, after all He had smitten, He still had a tender heart towards them.*

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

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

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

THE KING PASSING OVER KIDRON

NO. 3431

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1914.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 18 1869.

“The king, himself, also passed over the Brook Kidron.”
2 Samuel 15:23.

THE Brook Kidron was an insignificant, but usually a most foul and filthy ditch outside the walls of Jerusalem. If it were not, as some have called it, the open town sewer, yet there are reasons for believing that at least the filth of the Temple ran into it. The scourings of the sacrificial places went by an under-channel into this brook and we have one or two instances in Holy Writ where, when houses were purged and cleansed, the filth was thrown into the Brook Kidron. The passing, therefore, over that foul and black brook becomes the symbol of a time of deep sorrow and acute distress. The king, himself, then, passed over the Brook Kidron. The royal road lies over the place of sorrow. The way, even for kings, is by the brook of grief and shame. Let us think over that thought for a while.

I. THIS WAS TRUE OF KING DAVID.

David was one of the best of kings—certainly in the long list of his successors we meet with none who did such service to his country as did David, the once shepherd boy. It was through him, in his youth, that the country was saved from being enslaved by Philistia, and oftentimes in later years that stout heart and brave arm led in the van against the enemies of the Israel of God. He was the patriot king. If his country became a happy one, it was through his valor that it became so. And yet, good as he was, his subjects disowned and turned against him! And, in fear of them, “the king, himself, also passed over the Brook Kidron.” It is an ungrateful world we live in. Those who serve it best will find that at times it gives no rewards, or only gives them grudgingly—and afterwards forgets the good the man has done, because for some moment the tide of popular feeling may set against him. “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” If you live to your fellow men, even with the largest desires within you, yet if you forget to live also to your God, your cup will be full of wormwood, and your teeth will be broken with the gravel of disappointment.

David was also *one of the most tender of fathers*. He was never exacting with his children. I do not say he was one of the best of fathers, for correction was much neglected in his house. But he was a tender father and he had denied to Absalom nothing. And yet this renegade, this ungrateful, this unnatural son, was the very one from whom the sting must

come. Marvel not if they who owe their lives to you should seek your life! Marvel not if those who once nestled in your bosoms should wound you to the quick with their unkindness. You must not build upon the love of even the dearest you know. Your God is faithful and the Well-Beloved never changes, but all others can, and may, and sometimes do! 'Twas a dark Brook Kidron which David passed over when his favorite son, Absalom, was in hot pursuit of him—the great king, the good monarch, the tender father—was not exempt from this!

Despite the one great stain upon his character in the matter of Bathsheba, David was one of the best and most devout of men. I am sure the older one grows, the more one loves his Psalms, and what a history of the man you have there! It is a mercy for us that he was not a better man than he was, or else he could not have written Psalms suitable to such poor creatures as we are. I think I saw the other day in a window, concerning a certain statesman whom I love to honor, that he would be a better statesman if he were a worse man. I think not so, but still David, if he had been a better man, would have been a worse Psalmist, for even the faults of his character, inasmuch as they bring him down to our poor level, qualify him to write according to the feelings of our hearts and the emotions of our spirits. But he was a grand man, that David. He had the soldier's fault and he fell into the soldier's sin, but he also had the soldier's generous spirit and the soldier's self-sacrificing nobility of heart. He was through and through, a man. In him there was no guile. He hated deception, and he loved his God with all his heart! And yet, for all that, he must pass over the Brook Kidron. Hated by his subjects, despised by his darling child, with all the robes of royalty put aside, barefooted and with sackcloth on his head, Jerusalem's best and greatest king makes his way into the wilderness!

I gather from this that there is no extent of sorrow which is not possible to an heir of Heaven, and more yet, that there is no degree of shame, of calumny and of reproach, which may not gather around the best of men. The king, himself, also passed over Kidron and you know what happened when he passed over. The faithful soldiers wept as they saw that royal head dishonored, and those bright eyes that had flashed death upon his foes in the day of battle, now red with weeping. But what did Shimei do? He cursed him and threw dust upon him, and said, "Go up, you bloody man!" And what did Ahithophel do? He forsook him—seceded to the winning side and plotted the death of his former friend, even King David, himself, with whom he had so often eaten bread and walked to the House of God in company! And what said they all over the nation concerning David, but that God had forsaken him and, therefore, *they* might forsake and attack him, for the David of former days was not the same David now. His God had left him and the crown was given to his son. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, we know not what we may come to! We do not know what depths of grief we may yet have to fathom, nor into what deep mire we may yet sink. There is no saying. The best of men may have the worst of characters! The brightest stars may be swallowed up in a night! The moon, in her brightness, may be hidden by the clouds.

And the sun, itself, beneath the wings of tempest, may be concealed. Shall we, when we see our Christian Brothers and Sisters assailed, forsake them? Shall we join in the common clamor against them? We shall if we are not good men and true, but if we are such as God would have us be, we shall stand up for God's David as Ittai and his bodyguard did in the day of battle. We shall say, "These are the servants of the Most High God! Persecute them as you may. Cast the dust of slander upon them. Call them fanatics, enthusiasts, disturbers of the peace, and turners of the world upside down—we cast in our lot with them—for better or for worse, we take their Master and themselves, and across their Kidron will we go with them, believing that the day shall come when it shall be thought worth men's while to come back with them after another sort."

For, Brothers and Sisters, David came again up to Jerusalem. The Lord smote his enemies in their hinder parts, and put them to the rout. He came back, again, with sound of song and rejoicing. And so shall the righteous! So shall the best of men, in the day when God lights their candle and puts every tongue that rises against them in judgment to eternal condemnation! Stand you to the right, stand to the true! Stand faithful! Be willing to suffer. Be willing to be rebuked. Be willing to be slandered. King David went this way before you, and the day shall come when you, like he, shall come up from the slander and the scorn, the better for it all, rejoicing in God, who is the God of your salvation!

Thus much on David. I think there is much of interesting Truths of God to be gathered from David's history in passing over Kidron, if we had time to bring it out. But I rather suggest a vein of thought than attempt to enlarge upon it. But now, secondly—

II. A GREATER KING THAN DAVID PASSED OVER THE BROOK KIDRON and if, as David passed, all the people wept, let the people weep tonight as they remember how Zion's greater King passed over that black brook!

There never was such a King as He—so glorious and fair to look upon. His eyes were the suns of Heaven, and His Presence was the Glory thereof. But He came down among His creatures, who were fallen, seeking nothing but their good. He raised their dead. He healed their sick. When they were hungry, He fed them, and when they were fainting, He refreshed them. His words were those of love and His teachings full of wisdom and of Grace. But now they seek His blood! Yes, they seek His blood and in the night they are pursuing Him. They will come upon Him. They will haul Him off to the judgment seat—they will put Him to death. Oh, cruel world, not to know its best Benefactor! One of our poets has called Christ, "the Great Philanthropist," and so He was, only the word falls far short of what He really was, for He loved His people with all His heart! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Yes, His own, the Jews, were the most fierce in His destruction!

As the King passed over Kidron on that gloomy night, He had with Him a band of friends, but what was their friendship worth? They were true in heart, but they were weak and feeble. And when the conflict

came, they all forsook Him and fled! Peter, where are you? I know you, I hear you say, "I know not the Man," as with oaths and cursing you do deny Him! And John, where are you? Was not that John, the young man upon whom they laid hands, and he fled and left his garments behind him? Where are any of them? "Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled." In that bitter hour when He passed over Kidron, to make His cup as bitter as it could be, the kiss that betrayed Him came from the lips of Judas, the treasurer of His little band. "Friend!" he said, and betrayed Him with a friendly word upon his traitorous tongue!

To enter into the griefs of our Lord in Gethsemane is not our business, tonight, though we feel as if we must linger among those beds of bitter herbs, and stand and look into Kidron's gloomy stream. But you remember how He suffered even unto death for us, and what were the agonies by which He purchased our redemption! There is this concerning our Lord, which is not matched by David—He did actually die. He was absolutely slain. The foes who pursued Him overtook Him—they pierced His hands and His feet, they lifted Him up a spectacle of scorn—and there He died. But His Cross was His triumph! Calvary was a battlefield on which He won the victory and, like David, He came back again into Jerusalem, rising from the grave, no more to suffer or to die! And He returned again to Heaven, from where He came, with sound of clarion and with noise of them that make music and melody for joy of heart—"Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!"

See then, dear Brothers and Sisters, in the Person of our Lord, that this is a prophecy and an assurance that the cause of right and of truth—that those who espouse that cause and are pure and perfect, themselves, may, nevertheless, be brought very low—even to the dust! They may be slandered, despised and rejected and yes, for all that, their triumph is not in jeopardy and neither their cause nor themselves imperiled! Oh, it makes one strong to feel this! There cannot be anything happen to us so severe as has already happened to our King! There cannot be any slander more fierce than the slander poured on Him. They have called the Master of the house, Beelzebub! What can they now call the men of His household? They must find some lighter name for us! Be encouraged, then, you feeble bands of trembling Christians, encouraged in all your sufferings and griefs for Christ's sake, for as He yet rose from the dead and led captivity captive, even so shall the feeblest of His followers! And so I shall close by just speaking—

III. A WORD OR TWO TO OURSELVES CONCERNING OUR PASSING THE BROOK KIDRON.

Ah, we do not like going over Kidron. When it comes to the pinch, how we struggle against suffering, and especially against dishonor and slander! How many there were who would have gone on pilgrimage, but that Mr. Shame proved too much for them—they could not bear to go over the black Brook Kidron, could not endure to be made nothing of for the sake of the Lord of Glory—they even turned back!

Now I have these two words to say. First, dear Brothers and Sisters, with regard to the great cause of God throughout the world, *we must expect, in following the Truth of God, to meet with many attacks, many hardships and many defeats*. I do not think that the Lord's cause was ever meant to be consecutively triumphant, without intervals of defeat. The sea advances to the flood tide, wave by wave—first one wave advances, and then it recedes. Then another comes up and recedes again, and sometimes when the tide is coming to the very highest, there will be one of those waves which seems to go back and leave a wider space bare of seawater than before. And so it is with the cause of Christianity. A great wave rolled up at Pentecost, but it seemed to pause while under Herod's persecution. Then came other waves, until the world beheld, in some degree, the Light of Christ in all its corners. But again, there was a pausing for a while in those ages, which we call the Dark Ages. Then came a mighty wave again, which we couple with the name of Luther and of Calvin. Again there seemed to be a drawback, and then again, in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and others, there was another revival! And so it will be, I suppose, right on to the end of the Chapter—progress, and then a staying of the work—great success, then temporary defeat. Now are any of you living in districts where, notwithstanding much earnest work, the name of Christ does not seem to win the day? Do not be downcast! Do not be dispirited! Rather go to the Throne of Grace more earnestly and ask for Grace to gird yourselves afresh for the battle. The King passed over Kidron, and so shall His cause in your village, in your street, and the whole cause of God to which you are attached! But the King came back again, and so will He come back to you if you keep up heart and courage, and be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!

I know how it is in some of your hearts. You seemed to be growing in Grace so fast. You thought, "I shall soon reach a high standard of Grace!" But now you are discovering your corruption. You are perplexed and cast down because you do not grow as you once did. You are not so happy as you once were. Well, it may be you are passing over your Kidron, but do not be afraid! The King who has come to dwell in your hearts, though He is driven for a little into the wilderness and is hidden in the dark corners of your spirit, will come up again and take the throne, and reign, and drive out His enemy! Hold on, hold on to Christ's Cross and crown, for the victory will attend them still! Only be patient, for God is in no hurry. Wait and let Him have His time, and the good work around you, and the work within you will prove to be successful after all! Just at this juncture we, who fight for Christ's crown and seek to set His Truth free from the unholy alliance which she has so basely formed, may find, perhaps, that for a while disappointment awaits our banners. But if it does, we shall not for a moment quail in our courage nor stay in pressing the good cause on to the ultimate and the universal victory! Perhaps 'tis well that we do wait a while, for we might achieve but one purpose now—but a little pausing will set us on greater designs and on nobler aims. One

Church set free in Ireland, if it is not done quickly, another shall be set free and England's church be made to know that she has no right to ride rough-shod over this nation—and liberty and religious equality will be proclaimed here as well as there—and all the sooner because of the delay! Let the King's cause go over Kidron for a while, and the great ones of the earth set themselves in array against Christ and His crown—but the victory will come, and we can afford to wait and tarry till the predestined hour—for perhaps by waiting the vessel shall come back laden the more richly with treasure, to the water's edge pressed down with costly freight. But back she will come, come certainly and surely, to her Master's honor, and to the comfort of the Church of God in this our realm! Never let us despair for the Truth. Do the just thing and never be afraid! Let the earth be removed and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea—if you do the right and stand up for Christ, you need never fear! What if nations crack like potter's vessels and are driven like chaff before the wind by revolution after revolution? The saints of God rejoice that the battle is the Lord's and He will deliver every foe into our hands before long! And if He tarries for awhile, we will wait until He comes, for He will surely bring the victory with Him!

Lastly, just this gentle word to any of you who may at this time be greatly suffering. "The King, Himself, also passed over the Brook Kidron." Dear Brothers and Sisters, we, too, must all pass over Kidron, but the Prince's footsteps, the Prince's footsteps, are all along the road—

***"He leads us through no darker rooms,
Than He went through before."***

Let us have courage, then, and go through, too. You have had a sad bereavement. Yes, I wonder not that your tears fell on that coffin lid—'twas a precious life to lose, but, "Jesus wept," and that handkerchief of yours is perfumed with His sympathy. You had a heavy loss and you dread poverty. Well, it is an evil to be much dreaded, but the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head. Your poverty is gilded with His companionship! He was poorer than you! Oh, but you have lately been slandered. 'Tis the lot of all the righteous—birds always peck the ripest and the richest fruit the most. But they slandered your Lord—they said He was a drunk and a wine-bibber. They are only crowning you with the crown of thorns which once was put on His head—and the thorns are not so sharp for you as for Him—they were blunted by being put on His head. Ah, but you tell me that with all this a dear friend that you loved has turned against you. Remember Judas and do not marvel any more. "Ah," you say, "but even the Church of God thinks evil of me, though I have stood steadfast in the Truth." Remember your Lord was an alien to His mother's children, and the Church of His day was His direct enemy. Courage, dear Brothers and Sisters and fellow pilgrims to the skies! We must drink this cup—our heavenly Father has decreed it, but then He has mixed it, too, and He promises us, if we drink it, that we shall, by-and-by, drink of another cup of the new wine in the Kingdom of Glory! Submit—no, more—acquiesce! No, more, rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer with your Lord! Cleave to

your King when the many turn aside! Witness that He has the Living Word, and no one upon the earth beside, and in the day when the trumpet rings out the victory and the King comes back to His own, you shall come back with Him to the ivory palaces and to the abodes of the blessed, where you shall be crowned and shall dwell forever!

Dear Hearers, are you for Christ or for His enemies? Will you go with a despised Christ tonight? Will you take sides with Christ under the cloud? Will you go with Him barefoot through the mire, or do you like a silver-slipper religion? I pray you trust my Lord and Master! Take up His Cross. It will be the best thing you ever did, for it will bring you a glory in which the shame shall be forgotten!

The Lord bless each one of you, and may these few words comfort those who are tremblings for Christ's sake.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 15:13-23; ISAIAH 61; MARK 14:22-41.**

This was one of the greatest trials of David's life.

Verses 13, 14. *And there came a messenger to David, saying, the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart lest he overtake us suddenly, and brings evil upon us, and smites the city with the edge of the sword.* There is much to admire in David's conduct when he fled from Absalom, but yet his courage would seem to have well near forsaken him. In his brighter days before his great sin had weakened him, he would have been master of the situation, but now he trembles in the presence of the great calamity.

15. *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord, the king, shall appoint.* They were attached to him—ready to take his counsel at once. Can we say the same to King Jesus? Will every Christian here now say to his Master, "Behold, Your servants are ready to do whatever my Lord, the King, shall appoint"? There are many that pick and choose of Christ's commands. They do not obey all His will. There are known duties which are neglected—plain precepts which are willfully forgotten. I would to God we could all say from our heart to King Jesus, "Behold, Your servants are ready to do whatever my Lord, the King, shall appoint."

16-18. *And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house. And the king went forth, and all the people after him and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him. And all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men, who came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.* These were his old guard, soldiers who he kept always around his person, deeply attached to him, upon whose loyalty he could rely. But what a come-down from

the King of Israel to have an army of only 600 men—to be fleeing before his own rebellious people, led on by his more rebellious son!

19-23. *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Why do you, also, go with us? Return to your place and abide with the king: for you are a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us? Seeing I go where I may, you return and take back your brethren: mercy and truth be with you. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD lives, and as my lord, the king, lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be whether in death, or life, even there also will your servant be. And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him and all the country wept with a loud voice. And all the people passed over. The king, himself, also passed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.* A fit type of that future passage of the Kidron by the great Son of David when, on that dark and doleful night, when all the powers of darkness met the Prince—the King, Himself—passed over that black and bitter brook into the Garden of Gethsemane. There were faithful ones that went with David—there were some faithful ones with Christ. Happy are they who shall be found to be with their Lord and Master in the day of His sorrow, for they shall be with Him in the day of His joy!

ISAIAH 61.

Verses 1, 2. *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.* How condescending and how kind are the objectives of our Savior's mission—to put an end to sorrow! He searches for the mourners—they are the special objects of His care—and all that He does has this for one of its grand objectives—to comfort all that mourn! Surely if there is any troubled heart here, it may claim an interest in such a Divine work as this! Jesus has come to comfort all that mourn. Shall He not comfort you?

3. *To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion.* To make an appointment—an ordinance—a decree concerning them. And it will be to this effect—

3. *To give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness: that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified.* So it seems that God finds glory in the helping of His sad, sick, sorrowful creatures! He gets a glory out of making them. He gets higher glory out of making them new! Creation yields the moonlight glory—the new creation is a glory as of the sun shining in its strength! O you mourners, may God grant you Grace now to give glory to God by cheerfully accepting those wondrous blessings of Grace which Christ has come to bestow!

4. *And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.* When mourning souls find comfort, and captive souls get liberty, they are full of life and full of energy—and they begin to restore

what had become wasted and desolate. I guarantee you that there is nothing for a Church by way of medicine at all equal to pouring new blood into her by new-saved souls! They come among us with their new songs, like the sweet birds in summer, and seem to wake the morning with their gladsome music. They come among us like the dewdrops from the womb of the morning, sparkling in beauty, bearing the dew of their youth. May God send to many old churches that have got to be like old wastes, and some communities that have come to be like desolations—may He send to them these builders—these earnest, loving hearts to build them up!

5, 6. *And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine dressers. But you shall be named the priests of the LORD.* God's true Israel, His chosen, His elect—they may look upon all other men as their plowmen and their vine dressers. Kings and queens rule the world for you. For you the merchant, with his weights, divides the sea. For you, the plowman plows the soil. As for you, though you have a hand in these things, they are not your main employment. Your occupation is a higher one than theirs—the service of your God! You shall be named the priests of the Lord.

6. *Men shall call you ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves.* For all things are of God, and all things are yours through Jesus Christ. In that same day in which the Lord comforts mourners and binds up their broken hearts, He gives them to enter into a sacred priesthood in which they walk among the sons men as God's peculiar people—honored above all the rest of mankind. Oh, the distinctions which distinguishing Grace makes! How it lifts the poor from the dunghill and sits him among princes, even the princes of His people! Christ has done great things, indeed, for us, for though we were as beggars, behold He has made us kings and priests unto God—and we shall reign forever and ever!

7. *For your shame you shall have double: and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.* You may be persecuted. Your name may be cast out as evil, but when the Lord in mercy blesses and visits you, you shall have a wonderful recompense—more than you could have expected. "For your shame you shall have double."

7, 8. *Therefore in their land they shall possess the double. Everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them.* There are churches in the world that are not churches of God, and they supply their needs by forged demands from the people. But God hates robbery for a burnt offering. He accepts the willing gifts of His people and, with those who present them, He makes an Everlasting Covenant.

9. *And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD has blessed.* Oh, to have such distinguishing marks of character about us that all who see us may see that

the blessing of God is upon us! And this will be quite consistent with poverty, with sickness, for in the poverty there will be content, and in the sickness and depression of spirit there will yet be such Divine upholding that men shall be astonished that their fellow men shall be capable of such joy under such circumstances! They “shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed.”

10. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.* Brothers and Sisters, I wish we could all catch hold of the spirit of this verse that each one of us would now say, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord.”

10. *My soul shall be joyful in my God.* What a precious sentence—“My soul shall be joyful in my God.”

10. *For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.* On those festive occasions the Orientals are known to use all the wealth they have in decoration. The bridegroom decks himself with a crown—puts on a tiara. He is a king for once. And the bride herself brings out all the many jewels with which Eastern women deck themselves. Now all this, in a high spiritual sense, we find in Christ. He is not merely a covering to us, but ornament and beauty, adornment, exaltation, glory, honor! How beautiful a child of God looks in Christ, I cannot tell you, but I believe that next to His dear Son, the most engaging sight to the Divine Father is any one of His dear children whom He sees in Christ. You know we all think our children lovely—but God *knows* His children to be so when He has covered them with the robe of righteousness—and clothed them with the garments of salvation!

11. *For as the earth brings forth her buds and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

MARK 14:22-41.

Verse 22. *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them and said, Take, eat. This is My body.* It was part of a meal. It was no celebration. It was no sacrifice, bloody or unbloody! It was simply a commemorative ceremony of which He would now give them a specimen even before it became commemorative. “As they did eat, Jesus took bread.” No seeking for consecrated wafers or some special food, but such bread as they had been eating. “Blessed”—thanking God for it. “And broke it and gave it to them, and said, Take, eat. This is My body.”

23, 24. *And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My blood, of the new testament, which is shed for many.* There was no fear of their making the mistake, which has been made by Humanists, of taking these words *literally*, because Jesus Christ was sitting there! They could not imagine that as He took bread, He would say, *literally*, “This bread is My body.” Why, there was His body sitting there before them! Had He two bodies? When He gave them the cup and said, “This is My blood of the

new Covenant,” they never dreamt of such a thing as the wine in the cup was really and literally His blood! His blood was in His veins. They saw Him *living* there, not bleeding! No, it is an extraordinary thing that men who have the life of God in them, and have some spiritual discernment, have, nevertheless, in some instances, been found driving their faith into the belief of the absurd fable of transubstantiation! Jesus Christ means, “This *represents* My body. This *represents* My blood”—the usual way of uttering such a sense both in the Old and New Testament, even as Christ said, “I am the door.” Yet nobody thought that he was a door! “I am the way.” Nobody thought He was a roadway! “I am the shepherd,” and yet nobody supposed that he carried a crook and that He literally kept sheep! So He says, “This is My body, this is My blood” and they who sat there were in their senses—they were not superstitious. They knew what He meant.

25, 26. *Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the Kingdom of God. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.* I cannot resist repeating the remark I have often made about that singing of a hymn. It seems to me such a grand, brave thing for the Savior to sing a hymn after the last meal that he would eat with His disciples before His death—when He knew that He was going forth to all the torture of Pilate’s Hall and to death at Calvary! Yet He says, “Let us sing a hymn.” He chose a Psalm of David and, I dare say, He, Himself pitched a tune. “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.”

27. *And Jesus said unto them—As they walked along.*

27, 28. *All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.* What sweet comfort was there—as much as to say, “Though you are scattered, I will gather you. Though you forsake Me, I will not forsake you. I will go before you into our old haunts, into that Galilee of the Gentiles where I was known to preach aforetime. I will go before you into Galilee.”

29-30. *But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, that this day, even in this night—The day begins at sunset.*

30, 31. *Before the cock crows twice, you shall deny Me thrice. But he spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with You, I will not deny You in any wise. Likewise also said they all.* So Peter was not alone in his intense, though rash expression of attachment. They did mean, all of them, to stand to their Master and to die with Him, as you and I mean to. But do you think that we shall carry it out better than they? Not if our resolve, like theirs, is made in our own strength!

32. *And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane—The garden on the side of the hill of Olivet.*

32. *And He said to His disciples, Sit here while I pray. Eight of you keep watching at the garden gate to let me know when My betrayer comes.*

33. *And He took with Him, Peter and James and John, and began to be sorely amazed, and to be very heavy.* They had not seen Him in that state before. He seemed like one distracted, amazed—like one astonished out of all composure—unable to collect Himself or to contain Himself. And to be very heavy, as if an awful weight pressed on His soul.

34. *And said unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death: tarry you here and watch.* These three were to make His closest body-guard, to intimate to Him if any came.

35. *And He went forward a little.* A stone's cast, so as to be retired from them.

35, 36. *And fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto You: take away this cup from Me; nevertheless not what I will, but what You will.* That was the point of the prayer—the very pith and marrow of it—not what I will, but what You will.

37. *And He came and found them sleeping.* Three choice guards—His bosom companions.

37. *And said unto Peter, Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour?* Matthew and Luke tell us that He said, “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” And Mark tells us here that He especially said that to Peter. Now remember that Mark is the Gospel of Peter. No doubt Mark was the great friend of Peter, and writes his Gospel from Peter's point of view, so Peter, in the Gospel of Mark records the worst things about himself. And only he puts it here that the Master said, “Simon, do you sleep?” Bad enough for the others to be asleep, but, “Simon, do you sleep? Could not you watch one hour?”

38. *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.* Oh, that was a kind excuse to make for them—to say something good about them, even though they slept when they ought to have comforted Him! He did see that their spirit was ready, but the flesh was weak.

39, 40. *And again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy), neither knew they what to answer Him.* How could they excuse their conduct? A second time asleep! They were in a muddled state.

41. *And He came the third time, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

THE MISSION OF AFFLICTION

NO. 3164

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Let him alone, and let him curse, for so the Lord has ordered him.
It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the
Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.”*
2 Samuel 16:11, 12.

THE bright side of David's character was generally seen either when he was actively engaged or when he was greatly suffering. He was the man of action. When he ran to meet Goliath and returned with the giant's head in his hand, or when it was necessary that he should lead forth the hosts of God to war against Philistia, then David was in his element. He was one who never feared the face of man! He was courageous, dauntless and full of confidence in God.

Equally well does he stand out in the time of his trouble. He will not lift up his hand against Saul even when the king is in his power. If he cuts off the skirt of Saul's robe, even then his heart smites him. When his adversaries are before him and with a blow he can put them to death, with unusual magnanimity he restrains his hand and will not touch them. Revenge was not in his spirit. He was full of gentleness and tenderness. It is well for men of this kind when they have something to do or something to suffer. And perhaps this may account for it, that men have to be very busy or very faithful if they are to avoid being sinful. There are spirits so ardent, so fervent, that unless they have either to do or to bear God's will with a high degree of intensity, they are lacking in brightness and cheerfulness. David was seldom at leisure without falling into mischief. His great sin, his grievous sin was on this wise. It was the time when kings went forth to battle, but David sent Joab to fight against Ammon and he stayed at home. We read that at eventide, "David arose from off his bed and walked upon the roof of his house." He had become luxurious and then it was that temptation came and he fell. His second great offense was very much after the same order. He had subdued all his enemies. The rebellion of Absalom was put down with a strong hand. All was quiet within and without—and then Satan moved him to number the people. He thought, "I am the king of a great country and I should like to know how many subjects I have. I should like to know how many troops I have. Joab, go and take a census and bring it to me, that I may understand how great I am."

And then it was that God sent His servant to warn him that He would chasten him for his pride of heart. And He gave him the choice of three chastisements—one of which must fall upon the people. David was like a sword, which if hung up on a wall, would soon gather rust, but when he was moved to fight the Master's battle, he was of wondrous keen temper and could cut to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow! Let us dread, then, ease and repose—

***“For, more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests hanging over head.”***

Let us be afraid of having nothing to *do* and be thankful for something to *suffer* if we have not something to do actively, for let us alone and the best of us will corrode! And if I am addressing any man who has lately given up business and is enjoying repose, I would urge upon him the wisdom of seeking some service for Christ which would engage his faculties, for it is true of Christians as well as other people, that—

***“Satan always mischief finds,
For idle hands to do.”***

Our text tonight exhibits David in the time of his trouble. He is here so admirable and his conduct is here so commendable, that I hold him up as an example to all. There are four things in this transaction which we all ought to copy. The first was the *absence of resentment* from the heart of David. The second was *his entire resignation to the Divine Will*. The third was *his expectancy from God, alone*. And the fourth was *his looking to the bright side and still having hope*.

I. First, then, ADMIRE DAVID AND THEN TRY TO COPY HIM IN THIS RESPECT. We read you the story just now. [The exposition was always read first, but printed at the end of the sermon.] Now the attack of Shimei upon David was very cowardly. David had been king for many years but you never hear a word from Shimei while the king was on his throne and in power. This man was skulking in the farthest corners of the land, no doubt often biting his tongue, but having too much sense to use it against the powerful king. But now that David is fleeing from the palace and his son is pursuing him, eager for his blood, out comes this coward from his skulking place and begins to accuse the king. Those who would not have dared to speak against David before, now abuse him to his face with opprobrious epithets! It is very hard to bear a cowardly attack. One is very apt to reply and use hard words to one who takes advantage of your position and deals you the coward's blow. Only the coward strikes a man when he is down. It is just possible that somebody here may be suffering from an injury which he knows the person responsible for it would not have dared to inflict in years gone by. That helps to make the blow more cutting—when it comes from a coward's hands.

Besides being so cowardly, it was so brutal. We pity a man that is in distress. When a king has lost his throne. When a father has his own child in rebellion against him, one says, “Whatever may have been his fault, this is not the time to mention them.” When the poor heart is bleeding and the man is already suffering the very extremity of misery, who would wish to add a single ounce to the crushing weight that he has

to carry? Sympathy and common humanity seem to say, "Be quiet! Hush! Another time, when he mounts again to prosperity, then, if it is necessary, let us faithfully rebuke him for his faults, but not now. It is not seemly." If this dog of a Shimei must fly at David when he is suffering, most surely Satan, himself, must have set him on to aggravate to the last degree the miseries of David! And yet David has not one hard word to say against him. No, he becomes his advocate, bears with the brutal attack—cowardly as it was—betrays no temper, but peacefully, calmly, gratefully spares the life which was in his hands!

Moreover, remember that the attack was especially a false one. He called David a bloody man and accused him of having destroyed the house of Saul. Nothing could have been more false, for when Saul was in David's power on two occasions, once in the cave and once when he lay asleep on the slope of the mountain, David did not put out his hand to touch the Lord's anointed! When Saul and Jonathan were slain on Gilboa, David sincerely mourned and wrote that pathetic elegy—the song which he bade them learn to sing in mourning for Saul who fell on the high places. And afterwards, when the Amalekite came with the crown of Saul, hoping to be rewarded, David had him put to death on the spot! When wicked men came with the head of Ishbosheth, hoping to gratify David, he slew them both for the murder. Moreover, he sought out Mephibosheth and though he was lame in both his feet and could not stand, he bade him sit at his table and did him honor. So far from being a bloody man, he had, on the contrary, even though hunted by Saul and his blood had been sought by the leader of that house, yet had he never returned evil for evil.

It is very hard to be reproached for what you do not do. I do not know how, but somehow the falseness of an accusation does put a degree of sting into it. I have heard of a woman who was charged with a certain degree of dishonesty. Her minister said to her, "You need not be so grieved about it if it is not true." "No, Sir," she said, "I should not be grieved about it, if it were not true, but there's the point about it, it *is* true." And just so, if we were sensible, we should only feel those charges that are true—and the edge would be taken off others when we knew our conscience did not justify them. But it does not happen to be so. We do not hold the scales well. We feel that it is a very cruel thing to have things laid to our charge that we knew nothing of—and when our whole life has been in one direction—to have it laid to our door that we act quite contrary to that is a very stinging thing. Shimei, I suppose, could not have uttered anything that could sting David more to the quick than when he said to him, "You are a bloody man and have destroyed the house of Saul." Yet David did not put out his hand to him. He said, "Let him alone! Let him curse." Magnanimously he allowed him to escape unscathed, though Shimei cast stones and dirt upon him.

Sometimes the way in which a thing is put is more cutting than the thing itself. For Shimei did not merely speak his charge against David, but he put it in the bitterest way, "Come out, come out!" as though he

scorned him! And then he threw stones and dirt at him, as though he did not mind him now, as though he thought David the very dust beneath his feet and called him the offscouring of all things. Few among us can bear scorn. I suppose that a bitter sarcasm often stings where a downright charge, however false, might not have done so. A little bit of ridicule, with malice in it, will often wound, and little do we know how many may have gone with broken hearts all their days through unkind words that have been spoken, perhaps half in jest, but which, being taken in earnest, have made terrible wounds in the soul. Yet David would not be provoked by this man's lies nor by the tones in which he spoke them—but like a true king, all royal as he was, he said—"Let him alone. Let him curse. It is hard to bear, but I will bear it."

Now remember that David *could very easily have put an end to all this*. It was in his power to put an end to Shimei at once. "Off with his head," said Abishai—and there would have been the end of the argument. Sometimes we are very patient with things we cannot cure. It is good sound doctrine, "What can't be cured, must be endured." And, "Stooping down as needs he must, who cannot sit upright." If you cannot prevent, you may as well forgive—every fool will adopt that unless he is a strange fool, indeed! But David could take this fellow's head off and that in a moment, and yet he said, "Let him alone. Let him curse." And this makes a splendid example. If *you can revenge yourself*, DON'T. If you could do it as easily as open your hand, keep it shut! If one bitter word could end the argument, ask for Divine Grace to spare that bitter word.

Reflect, too, that *David was urged by others to put an end to this man*. Sometimes we readily follow advice, especially when there is something that we like in the advice. And who among us would not like the advice? I confess on reading the Chapter, that if I had been in Abishai's case, I am afraid I should have taken his head off first, and asked permission afterwards. I am afraid it would have been very bad and wicked, but in such a case as that, when my dear king for whom I had lived and would have died—such a blessed king as David—was scoffed at by such a dog as that—who would not have said, "Off with his head!" and have thought he did him too much honor in those rough days? Yet David said, "No, we must not follow bad advice, we must not let the zeal of earnest friends lead us too fast." If they are too fast, we must be too slow. In all matters of vengeance, if others would go forward, we must draw back and say, "Christ has bidden us forgive even to seventy times seven," and so will we do. Remember this is under the old dispensation, when the Law of God said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and so on—and, therefore, David might have been more excused if he had avenged himself! But he seems to have caught, like a Prophet, the light of the coming time, and spared the man as Christ would have spared him, if He had been there. In this he is to be copied by us all!

To gather all up in one, Beloved, if the trouble that comes to you, comes to you as a second cause, don't look at the second cause so as to quarrel with it and don't say, "I would not mind if it had not been So-

and-So.” That is why God selected So-and-So to chasten you, for when a father wants to make a child smart, he gets his heaviest rod! And so does God. He has taken up that instrument which will make you smart and cry out most! It is always foolish for us to fret about the second cause. If you threaten a dog with a stick, he bites the stick—but if he were a sensible dog—he would bite you, only he does not know any better and so he bites the stick! And if we rebel against the second cause we are in error. If there is anyone we should complain against, it would be God who uses the instrument! But as we cannot and would not if we could complain against Him, it is best for us to say as David did, “Let him alone! Let him curse! The Lord has ordered him. The Lord has ordered him.”

Now don't we tonight say, “I could have borne that other trial if God had sent that”? Well, *accept your present trial* and oh, if you are vexed with So-and-So, forgive him! There is a higher hand than his in this matter. It is a rough knife that you have been pruned with, but it is the gardener that used the knife—and your God is using this affliction for your good. Don't look at the affliction as much as at the end and at the design of God.

It was very beautiful for David to make excuses for Shimei. Notice how he puts it. “Well, there is Absalom, my son—he is seeking my life. No wonder that this man should! He is no relation of mine! I could not expect love from him. And then, moreover,” he said, “he is a Benjamite. Now God has been pleased to put me, David, into the place of Saul that was a Benjamite, and of course this man sympathizes with the tribe that has lost the royal crown.” David put his finger on the secret. “The man has been a sufferer through me, therefore he is angry, he is estranged from me. I could not expect gentle treatment from him and I have unconsciously, without intending to injure him, taken away some authority from the family to which he belongs and, therefore, I can somewhat shut my eyes to his hard treatment of me and, at any rate, I will show that God is using him as an instrument and will freely forgive him.” Now I am talking very simply and upon simple conduct, but I am sorrowfully conscious that a great many Christian people need to be preached to about giving lessons to others. As soon as ever a child learns to say, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” which is a little infant's prayer—he is taught to say, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us”—and yet I find that some who have been Christians for years—at least they say they have—if they get a little put out about some insignificant trifle, take a long time to get their feathers smooth again! Perhaps it is something they need hardly have noticed, and yet they will go fretting about it day after day! Oh, let us be men and women, and let us be Christian men and women, and let us be able to forbear! “In many things we offend all.” “It is necessary that offenses come, but woe unto that man by whom the offense came.” I think it is equal woe unto that man who will not let the offense go away. Someone says, “I suppose somebody must have been offended here.” I am sure I don't know of any-

body, but if the cap fits, let them wear it. May we always learn to forgive as we hope to be forgiven!

II. Now the second thing is this—DAVID'S COMPLETE RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL. "It is enough for me that the Lord has bidden him," or, as in the 10th verse, "Let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, 'Curse David.'" David felt very keenly the wicked act of his enemy, but he felt that it was sent for his further chastisement and, therefore, he accepted it willingly. I daresay he said to himself, "I don't deserve this charge. It is a very base one, but if Shimei had known all about me, he might have charged me with something quite as bad as that and he would have been quite correct." When we are railed at by graceless men and they slander us, we may say to ourselves, "Well, well, if they did but know us better and could see our hearts, they could perhaps have said something worse against us—so we will be well content to bear this." For David, though Shimei did not know about it, had grievously sinned. It does not make Shimei's conduct any better, but David felt, "I have deserved this at the hands of the Lord, or something else if not on this particular occasion." Then feeling it was the Lord, he said to himself, "I do not see the meaning of this, but I am sure there is love in it. Did God ever do anything to His children except in love? I do not see the necessity of it, but I am certain there is wisdom in it. Did the Lord ever do anything to his children that was not right? I do not see the benefit that may come out of it to me, but did God ever exercise His children with fruitless trials?" *Is there not a Divine necessity for all chastisements?* It is the Lord—that is enough for David.

Brothers and Sisters, is that enough for you? The Lord has done it, shall I open my mouth again when I know my Father did it? Did He take my child? Well, blessed be His name that He loved my little one so well! Did He take my gold? Well, He only lent it to me and a thing borrowed ought to go laughing back to its owner! Let Him take back what He lent. He gives and, blessed be His name, He takes but what He gave! Therefore let Him still be praised! David seems to me, as it were, to have lain down before God under a sense of having done wrong in days gone past and said to Him, "My Father, chasten me just as You will. My rebellious spirit is humbled before You. If it is necessary for my good that I suffer from Your hand, this affliction and a thousand others, go on, go on! Your child may weep, but he will not complain. Your child may suffer, but he will bring no charge against You. What You please to do, it shall be my pleasure to bear. Your pleasure and my pleasure shall be one pleasure henceforth and forevermore. If the Lord has done it, so let it be."

I invite every troubled Brother and Sister here to *cry for Grace from God to be able to see God's hand in every trial and then for Grace to, seeing God's hand, submit at once to it! No, not only to submit, but to acquiesce and to rejoice in it!* "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." I think there is generally an end to troubles when we get to that, for when the Lord sees we are willing that He should do what He wills, then He takes back His hand and says, "I need not chasten My child—He

now submits himself to Me. What would have been effected by My chastisement is already effected and, therefore, I will not chasten him." You know David was not long in the dark after he was condemned to be there. "Well," says the Lord, "if My child does not cry because he is left without a candle, he shall have his candle. Now I have tried him and proved him, he shall come before Me in the light."

What is the *use of our kicking and struggling against the Lord*? What benefit ever comes of our rebellion against Him? The ox and the mule which have no understanding have to be held in with bit and bridle. What comfort ever came to you from your rebellions and reluctances? And so with self-will and desiring to have your own way—what do you get from these but the scourge? Oh, it is the happiest and most blessed condition to *lie passive in God's hands* and know no will but His—to feel a self-annihilation in which self is not destroyed but is absorbed into God so that we delight in the inner man in the will of God and always say, "Father, Your will be done." This is a hard lesson—far easier to preach about than to practice—and a great deal easier to think of when you have learned it than to carry it out.

I am often reminded of an old friend, Will Richardson, I used to talk with. He, said, "When it is winter time, I think I could mow and reap and fancy if you were only to give Will the sickle and scythe, what a splendid day's work he would do! That is in the winter, but in the summer I have not been half a day at work before I begin to feel that my poor old bones won't stand much more work and to think that I am hardly the man for a farm laborer." Now so it is with our own strength. If we fell back upon the strength of God, we would be strong when we are weak, but when we fancy we are getting stronger, we are very much weaker and might very often measure ourselves in the inverse ratio of what we think!

III. DAVID IS TO BE IMITATED IN ANOTHER RESPECT, NAMELY, THAT HIS EXPECTATION WAS ONLY FROM GOD. Notice the text—"It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction." There was Abishai ready to take off this man's head, but David said, "It may be that the Lord will look upon my affliction." He thought that when he was in such great trouble, God would surely have pity upon him! Oh, you tried ones, look away, once and for all, from man to your God! "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." There are two ways of going to a place. One is to go round and the other is to go straight. Now the straight road is the shortest way. And there are two ways of getting help. The one is to go round to all your friends and get disappointed—and then at last go to God! The other is to go to God first. That is the shortest way. God can make your friends help you afterwards. Seek first God and His righteousness, and the help of friends will be added afterwards. Straight forward makes the best running. Out of all troubles, the surest deliverance is from God's right hand. Therefore from all troubles, the readiest way to escape is to draw near to God in prayer. Go, not to this friend or that, but pour out your story before God. Remember how the poet puts it—

***“Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To Heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord has done for me!”***

Human friends fail us! The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack and the most faithful heart will sometimes waver—and when there is most need of our friends, we find that they fail us. But our God is eternal and Omnipotent—who has ever trusted in Him in vain? Where is the man that can say, I looked upon Him and hoped in Him—and I am ashamed of my hope?

The beauty of David’s looking alone to God came out in this quite calmly and quietly. He said to himself, “God will get me out of this,” therefore he was not angry with Shimei. He did not want his head to be cut off or anything of the sort. “*God will do it.*” Oh, that is the man for life, that is the man for death, that is the man for smooth waters and that is the man for storms who lives upon his God! If a man stays in that frame of mind, what can disturb him? Though the mountains were cast into the midst of the sea and the earth were moved, yet still would he in patience possess his soul and still be calm, for of such a man I may say, “His soul shall dwell at ease, his seed shall inherit the earth.” At destruction and famine, he will laugh. God has given His angels charge concerning such a man to keep him in all his ways, for this is the man that dwells in the secret places of the most High and he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty! The Lord says of him, “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name. He has proved it by trusting in Me and Me, alone. Therefore will I never fail him, neither shall he suffer long.” “Trust you in the Lord, alone, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.” Gather up your confidences, make them into one confidence and fix them all on Him! Lean not here and there—you will grow crooked in yourself and the staff you lean on shall turn to a spear and pierce you. Lean wholly upon God and, as He is everywhere, you shall stand upright in leaning upon Him. This shall be the uprightness of your ways that you stay yourself on the Rock of Ages. May we learn this lesson! It is a high one. May the Spirit of God teach it to us!

IV. Now the last of the four lessons is this—DAVID LEARNED TO LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE. What is the bright side of trouble? What is the bright side of your trouble, dear Friend? Well, I don’t know what you would call the bright side, but David considered the bright side of his trouble to be the black side—and I think every man who walks by faith knows that to be so. If you read the text you see it at once, “It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction and will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” Much as if he said, “though my affliction is so very bitter, God will pity me.” So the black side is the bright one! “This man has cursed me. That will move God to come to my side and defend me.” So the black side is the bright one again.

There is a sailor and the tide has ebbed out altogether. “Now,” he says, “is the turning.” Those that watch at night are glad when it comes to the

darkest, because they know it certainly cannot be darker—and they know that daylight is coming soon. The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the day. We have an old saying about the weather, “As the day lengthens, the cold strengthens.” And so it does, but soon it will come to an end. The cold will soon yield. Be thankful when you have got into midwinter because you cannot go any deeper. Let us be glad of that. Now if in our blackest parts of sorrow there is brightness, there must be brightness elsewhere and, indeed, if we were half as inquisitive to find out that which will cheer us, as to discover that of which we may complain, we should soon have reasons of gratitude in the lowest and worst condition! We rummage our affairs to find out something to distress ourselves about, ambitious to multiply our sorrows, diligent to increase our distresses as though our woes were wealth and our sorrows were worth hoarding up! But if we turned that curiosity and inquisitiveness of ours into another channel, we would begin to find that there are diamonds in dark mines, pearls in rough oyster shells, rainbows that deck the brow of the storm and blessings that come to us in the garb of curses! We should soon have cause for joy. I suggest to our friends, therefore, the *blessed habit of trying to find the silver lining of the dark cloud*—to look away from the black surface into the bright gleam so that they may have reason to rejoice in the Most High!

To conclude—David was a glorious man. If instead of having expectation from God he had only had confidence in his fellow men and had gone about always repining and mourning and finding out the dark side of everything—well, he would have been a very small Psalmist! In fact, I don’t think he could have written a Psalm at all, except a poor one. He would have been a poor king—a mere pigmy—and would never have shone out as a saint. Now if you, dear Brother and Sister, want to shine before God and be among the illustrious elect who the Lord makes as stars in the Church’s history, *pray for patience towards men and patience towards God*. Pray for bright eyes to find out the light even in the darkness. Pray to always lean wholly upon God and keep yourself upon Him. You will glorify God in that way and you will be the means of bringing others to God. Distrustful preachers do not win souls. Moaning and repining Sunday school teachers will not bring children to Christ. “The joy of the Lord is our strength.” The patience which makes us possess our souls gives us the fullness of the blessing of the Lord! May the Lord teach us in that school—we are very foolish. The Lord strengthen us in His Grace—we are very weak. And may all of us on earth live quietly and happily the risen life which our Savior did!

Now if I am speaking to any here tonight who are rebellious and do not love the Lord, I would remind them that *there is a cure for these maladies—faith in Jesus Christ!* He that believes in Him shall find the water that flowed from His pierced side to be the double cure of sin. May you have that cure—everyone of you—for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

ISAIAH 43:1-7.

In this Chapter the Lord comforts His people. By His Divine foresight He perceives that there are great and varied trials a little way ahead and, therefore, He prepares them for the ordeal. They are to go through rushing waters and flaming fires and He kindly bids them not to be afraid. How often in God's Word do we read those tender, gracious words, "*Fear not*"! Should not the trembling ones listen to the voice of their God and obey it when He says to them "*Fear not*"? It is not right for you who fear God to fear anything else. Once brought to know the Lord, who can harm you? Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, what danger need you dread? No, rather, be of good comfort and press forward with peaceful confidence, though floods and flames await you!

To encourage His people to rise superior to their fears, the gracious God goes on to issue matchless promises—"*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.*" Present good—"*I will be with you.*" Absent danger—"*they shall not overflow you.*" God stays His people's hearts by His own promises. In proportion to their faith, those promises will lift them up. If you do not believe the promise, you shall not be established by it. But if, with child-like confidence, you accept every Word of God as true, then His Word shall be to you the joy of your heart and the delight of your spirit, and you shall be a stranger to fear. The Lord proceeds, after giving those promises, to set before them what He Himself is and what He has done for them, and what they are to Him. He is speaking, of course, to Israel. And He says of Israel, His chosen nation, "*I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.*" What cause for fear now remains? All Believers are of the true Israel. Abraham was the father of the faithful. The faithful, or the believing, are, therefore, Abraham's seed according to the promise! The seed was not after the flesh, else would the children of Ishmael have been the heirs of the Covenant, but the true seed was born according to promise and in the power of God, for Isaac was born when his parents were old, by faith in the power of God! Isaac was not the child of flesh, but he was born according to promise, so that we who are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by His Spirit and according to the Divine promise, are the true children of Abraham! We are the spiritual Israel. Though after the flesh Abraham is ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledge us not, yet are we the true seed of him who was the father of Believers. The literal Israel was the type of those chosen and favored ones who by faith are born-again according to promise. To these heirs, according to promise, the Lord said, "*I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.*" Let us now meditate on this passage verse by verse.

Verse 1. *But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine. "Fear not," is a command of God, and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it.*

God, who created and formed us, says to us, “Fear not,” and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away. Observe the tender ties that bind our God to His people—Creation, the formation of them for His praise—Redemption, the purchase of them for Himself and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to Himself even when we forget them. He recollects His eternal love and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous, and our faith is feeble, “yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Blessed be His holy name!

2. *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. “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”* The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast! God’s Presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation. This He has promised to us. He does not say what He will do for us, but He does tell us that He will be with us—and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities. “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through the fire and yet not being burned—but there was a greater wonder that was seen by Moses which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed! Now a bush in the desert is usually so dry that at the first application of fire, it flames, glows and is speedily gone! Yet you and I who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn and yet we shall not be consumed, because the God who was in the bush is also with us, and in us! “*Neither shall the flame kindle upon you.*” You shall come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon you, for where God is, all is safe.

3. *For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. “For I am the Lord your God.”* This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing! Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If your gourd is withered, your God is still the same as He ever was! “*For I am Jehovah, your God.*” “*I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.*” And He has given infinitely more than that for us who are now His people, for He gave His only-begotten Son that He might redeem us with His precious blood! Now that we have cost Him so much, is it likely that He will ever forsake us? It is not possible!

4. *Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.* How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become “*honorable.*” “*Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honora-*

ble.” God does not call His people by their old names of dishonor, but He gives them the title of, “Right Honorable,” and makes them the nobility of His Court. “Unto you that believe He is an honor,” and you have honor in Him and from Him.

5-7. *Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even everyone that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed Him; yes, I have made Him. “Fear not: for I am with you.”* This is the second time that the blessed words, “Fear not,” ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the Jubilee to poor trembling hearts! *“Fear not, for I am with you.”* The Lord seems to say to each troubled Believer, “My honor is pledged to secure your safety. All My attributes are engaged on your behalf right to the end. Yes, I am, Myself, with you, therefore, fear not.” *“I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, My daughter from the ends of the earth; everyone that is called by My name.”* Whatever happens, God will be with His Church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the Divine Purpose. From east or west, north or south, all His sons and daughters shall come unto Him, everyone that is called by His name. *“For I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.”* And God will be glorified in His people! The object of their creation is the glory of their God, and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord’s good time. The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of His children for His own glory. This accounts for many of our troubles and for all our deliverances—it is that God may be glorified by bringing His children through the fires and through the floods. A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much glory, but they that do business in the great waters see the works of God and His wonders in the deep, and they give Him praise and, besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for His goodness and God is thereby glorified!

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

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A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He...put his household in order, and hanged himself.”
2 Samuel 17:23.***

AHITHOPHEL was a man of keen perception and those who consulted him followed his advice with as much confidence as if he had been an oracle from Heaven. He was a great master of diplomacy, versed in the arts of cunning—far-seeing, cautious, deep. He was for years the friend and counselor of David. But thinking it judicious to be on the popular side, he left his old master that he might, like many other courtiers, worship the rising sun and hold an eminent position under Absalom. This, to use diplomatic language, was not only a crime, but a mistake. Absalom was not the man to follow the warnings of wisdom and Ahithophel found himself supplanted by another counselor. And whereas he was so incensed that he left Absalom, hurried home, arranged his personal affairs and hanged himself in sheer vexation.

His case teaches us that the greatest worldly wisdom will not preserve a man from the utmost folly. Here was a man worthy to be called the Nestor of debate, who yet had not wit enough to keep his neck from the fatal noose! Many a man, supremely wise for a time, fails in the long run. The renowned monarch, shrewd for the hour, has before long proved his whole system to be a fatal mistake. Instances there are, near to hand, where a brilliant career has ended in shame—a life of wealth closed in poverty—an empire collapsed in ruin. The wisdom which contemplates only this life fails even in its own sphere. Its tricks are too shallow, its devices too temporary and the whole comes down with a crash when least expected to fall! What sad cases have we seen of men who have been wise in policy, who have utterly failed from lack of principle! For lack of the spirit of honor and truth to establish them, they have built palaces of ice which have melted before they were complete. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The wisdom which comes from above is the only wisdom—the secular is folly until the sacred blends its golden stream therewith!

I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. “*He put his house in order, and hanged himself.*” To put his house in order showed that he was a prudent man. To hang himself proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care and yet shall be so hapless as to take his own life afterwards? As Bishop Hall pithily says, “Could it be possible that he should be careful to order his house who

regarded not to order his impetuous passions? That he should care for his house who cared not for either body or soul?" Strange incongruity—he makes his will and then, because he cannot have his will, he wills to die! 'Tis another proof that madness is in the hearts of the sons of men! Marvel not at this one display of folly, for I shall have to show you that the case of Ahithophel is, in the spirit of it, almost universal. And as I shall describe sundry similar individuals, many of you will perceive that I speak of you. Thousands set their houses in order, but destroy their souls! They look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts' best interests. They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care—everywhere but where they are most required. They save their money, but squander their happiness. They are guardians of their estates, but suicides of their souls. This folly takes many forms, but it is seen on all hands, and the sight should make the Christian weep over the madness of his fellow men. May the series of portraits which will now pass before us, while they hold the mirror up to Nature, also point us in the way of Grace!

See before you, then, the portrait of AN ATTENTIVE SERVANT. He is faithful to his employers and fulfils well the office to which he is appointed. He is up with the lark. He toils all day—he rests not till his task is done. He neglects nothing which he undertakes. I see him among the throng, I will single him out and talk with him.

You have been engaged for years in farming. You have plowed, sown, reaped and gathered into the barn—and no one has done the work better than you, and yet, though you have been so careful in your labor, you have never sown to the Spirit, nor cared to reap Life Everlasting. You have never asked to have your heart plowed with the Gospel plow, nor sown with the living Seed—and the consequence will be that at the last, you will have no harvest but weeds and thistles—and you will be given over to eternal destruction! What causes you to care for the clover and the turnips, the cows and the sheep, but never for yourself, your truest self, your ever-existing soul? What? All this care about the field, and no care about your heart? All this toil for a harvest which the hungry shall eat up—and no care whatever about the harvest that shall last eternally?

Or you have been occupied all your life in a garden and there, what earnestness you have shown, what taste in the training of the plants and flowers, what diligence in digging, planting, weeding and watering! Often has your employer congratulated himself that he has so careful a servant. You take a delight in your work and well you may, for some relics of Eden's memories still linger around a garden—but how is it that you are so choice with yonder tulip and so indifferent about your own spirit? What? You care for a poor rose which so soon is withered—and have no thought about your immortal nature? Does this sound like a reasonable man? You were very careful, in the winter, to keep up the heat of the greenhouse, lest those feeble plants should suffer from the frost. Have you, then, no care to be protected from temptation and from the dread storms of Almighty Wrath which are so soon to come? Can it be that you are diligent in ordering the walks, beds and shrubberies of your master's grounds, and yet are utterly careless about the garden of

your heart in which fairer flowers would bloom and yield you a far richer reward? I marvel at you! It seems so strange that you should be so good a worker for others, but take such poor care of yourself! I fear your lament will have to be, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

It would be too long a task to dwell particularly on each of your employments, but I will hope that, in each case, you are anxious to do your work thoroughly, so as to secure approval. The horse is not badly fed, nor the carriage recklessly driven, nor the wall carelessly built, nor the woods ill planed—you would be ashamed to be called a negligent workman. Put it, then, to yourself—will you watch over another man's goods and be unmindful of your own highest good? What? Do you mind the horse and the wagon, the parcels, the errands, all sorts of little matters and shall that soul of yours, which will outlast the sun and live when stars grow dim, be left without a thought? What? Do you love others so much and yourself so little? Are minor matters to absorb all your thoughts, while your own eternal concerns are left in utter neglect?

Some of you are domestic servants and endeavor to discharge your duties well. You have much to do from morning till night and you would be ashamed for anyone to say, "The room is unswept, cobwebs are on the walls, the floors are filthy, the meals are badly cooked because you are a bad servant." No, you feel rather proud that when you have a situation, you can keep it and that the mistress is content with you. Suffer me, then, to ask you, in the gentlest manner, Is your heart never to be cleansed? Are your sins always to defile it? Have you no thought about the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Do you think God made you to be a mere sweeper and cleaner of rooms, a cooker of meat, and so on, and that this is all you were designed for? There must be a higher and a better life for you—and do you altogether disregard it? Will you weary yourself, day by day, about another person's house and have you no interest in your own soul? Have you so much care to please (as you should) your master and mistress, and no care about being reconciled to God? I will not think that you are so bereft of reason!

I address a still larger class, probably, if I say there are many here who will go off to the City, in the morning, to fulfill the duties of confidential accountants. You never suffer the books to be inaccurate—they balance to a farthing! It would distress you if, through your inadvertence, the firm lost even a sixpence. You have perhaps been many years with the same employers and have their unbounded respect. From your boyhood to this day, you have been connected with the house. I have known several admirable men of high integrity and thorough faithfulness, whom their employers could never sufficiently value, for they laid themselves out with intense zeal to promote their commercial interests and worked far harder than the heads of the house ever did! Had the whole concern been their own, they could not have been more diligent—and yet these very men gave no head to their own personal interests for another world! It was grievous to observe that God was not in all their thoughts, nor Heaven, nor Hell, nor their own precious souls. You good and faithful servants of men, will you perish as unfaithful

servants of God? What? Will you never look onward to the last great reckoning? Is it nothing to you that the debts due to Divine Justice are undischarged? Are you willing to be called before the Lord of All and to hear Him say, "You wicked and slothful servant! I gave you a talent, but you have wrapped it in a napkin." God forbid that I should diminish one grain of your diligence in your secular avocations, but, from the very zeal you throw into these, I charge you, if you are reasonable men, see to it that you destroy not your own souls! Be not like Ahithophel who set his house in order and hanged himself! Set not your master's concerns in order and then destroy your own souls—for how shall you escape if you neglect the great salvation?

Look now to another picture—THE PRUDENT MERCHANT. I must briefly sketch him. He knows the ways of trade, studies the state of the market, is quick to perceive the opportunity of gain, has been cautious in his speculations, has secured what he has obtained and is now in possession of a competency, or on the road to it! He prides himself in a quiet way, upon the prudence with which he conducts all his worldly transactions. And, my dear Friend, I am sure I am glad to see you prudent in business, for much misery would be caused to others as well as to yourself by recklessness and folly. But I want to ask you, if you are thoughtless about religion, how it is that you can be so inconsistent? Do you study how to buy, and buy well, but will you never buy the Truth of God? Do you put all that you get into a safe bank, but will you never lay up treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts? You are wary of your speculations, but will you play so deep a hazard as to jeopardize your soul? You have been for years accustomed to rise up early, sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness—will you never rise early to seek the Lord? Will you never prevent the night watches to find a Savior? Is the body everything? Is gold your god? Why, you are a man of intelligence and reading and you know that there are higher considerations than those of business and the state of trade! You do not believe yourself to be of the same order of beings as the brute that perishes—you expect to live in another state! You have a Book which tells you what that life will be and how it may be shaped for joy—or left to be drifted into endless sorrow.

Am I a fanatic, my dear Sir, if I respectfully put my hand on yours and say, "I beseech you, think not all of the less, and nothing of the greater, lest haply, when you come to die, the same may be said of you as of a rich man of old who had been as cautious and as careful as you—'You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall these things be which you have provided?' I charge you, if you are prudent, prove it by being prudent about the weightiest of all concerns. If you are not, after all, a mere bragger as to prudence, a mere child enraptured with silly toys, then show your wisdom by following the wisest course." I have heard of one, the stewardess of an American vessel, who, when the ship was sinking, saw heaps of gold coin scattered upon the cabin floor by those who had thrown it there in the confusion of their escape. She gathered up large quantities of it, wrapped it round her waist, and leaped into the water! She sank like a millstone, as though she had studiously prepared herself for destruction! I fear that many of you traders are

diligently collecting guarantees for your surer ruin, planning to bury yourselves beneath your glittering hoards. Be wise in time. My voice, no, my *heart* pleads with you, for your soul's sake and for Christ's sake, be not like Ahithophel who set his house in order, and hanged himself! Take sure bond for enduring happiness! Invest in indisputable securities! Have done with infinite risks and be assured of life everlasting!

A third photograph shall now be exhibited. This will describe a smaller, but a very valuable class of men—and if they were blessed of God, how glad would I be! THE DILIGENT STUDENT. He seeks out the best of books to assist him in the pursuit of his branch of knowledge. He burns the midnight oil. He is not afraid of toil. He cares not for throbbing brain and weary eyes, but he presses on—he trains his memory, he schools his judgment and all with the hope that he may be numbered with the learned. The examinations of his university are to him the most important periods in the calendar—his degree is the prize of his high calling. Knowledge is sweet and the honor of being associated with the learned is coveted. My young Friend, I would not for a moment abate your zeal, but I would beg space for one consideration worthy of immediate attention. Ought the best of sciences to be left to the last? Should self-knowledge and acquaintance with God be treated as secondary importance? Should not the Word of God be the chief volume in the wise man's library? Should you not burn the midnight oil to peruse the Infallible page written by the Divine finger? With all your getting, should you not get the understanding which comes from above and the knowledge which is the gift of God, and which will introduce you, if not among the learned, yet among the gracious? If not into the academy of savants, yet into the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven? Should there not be with you the wish to train your complete manhood and to educate yourself to the fullness of the stature of what a man should be? Should not the noblest part have the chief care? I speak to a wise man! I would have him be truly wise. I would not have him set his study in order and tutor himself—and then forget the eternal life and the destiny that awaits him. O Student, seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and then shall your temple of wisdom be built upon a Rock!

I will take another character, a character which is very common in great cities—I am not sure but what it is common enough—THE REFORMING POLITICIAN. I value our politicians highly, but we scarcely need to be overstocked with those who brawl in public houses and discussion rooms while their families are starving at home! Some men who spend a great deal of time in considering politics, are hardly benefiting the commonwealth to the extent they imagine. I will suppose I am addressing a man who feels the home and foreign affairs of the nation to be his particular department. Well, my respected Friend, I trust you occupy a useful place in the general economy, but I need to ask you one or two questions well worthy of a Reformer's or a Conservative's consideration. You have been looking up abuses—have you no abuses in your own life which need correcting? There is no doubt about the Reform

Bill having been needed, but do you not think a Reform Bill is needed by some of us at home—in reference to our own characters and especially in reference to our relation towards our God and our Savior? I think only he who is ignorant of himself will deny that. And would it not be a fine thing to begin at home and let the politics of our house and our heart be set quite right, and that immediately? You have in your brain a complete scheme for paying off the National Debt, elevating the nation, remodeling the navy, improving the army, managing the Colonies, delivering France and establishing the best form of government in Europe! I am afraid your schemes may not be carried out as soon as you desire, but may I not suggest to you that your own heart needs renewing by the Spirit of God, your many sins need removing by the Atonement of Jesus and your whole life requires a deep and radical change? And this is a practical measure which no aristocracy will oppose, which no vested interests will defeat and which need not be delayed for another election or a new Premier!

I daresay you have faced much opposition and expect to face much more in agitating the important question which you have taken up, but ah, my Friend, will you not sometimes agitate questions with your conscience? Will you not discuss with your inner nature the great Truths which God has revealed? Would it not be worth your while, at last, to spend some time in your private council chamber with yourself thinking of the now, and of the past, and of the to come—considering God, Christ, Heaven, Hell and yourself as connected with all these? I press it on you—it seems to me to be the greatest of all inconsistencies that a man should think himself able to guide a nation and yet should lose his own soul! That he should have schemes by which to turn this world into a Paradise and yet lose Paradise for himself! That he should declaim violently against war and all sorts of evils and yet, himself, should be at war with God! Himself a slave to sin! Shall he talk of freedom while he is manacled by his lusts and appetites? Shall he be enslaved by drink and yet be the champion of liberty? He that teaches freedom should himself be free! It is ill to see a man contending for others and a captive himself! To arrange the nation's affairs and to destroy yourself is as foolish as Ahithophel who put his household in order, and hanged himself!

We will pass to another character—and how much of what I am now to utter may concern myself I pray God to teach me—THE ZEALOUS PREACHER. The character is no imaginary one. It is not suggested by bitterness, or colored by fanaticism—there have been such and will be such to the end—men who study the Scriptures, are masters of theology, versed in doctrine, conversant with law—men who teach the lessons they have gathered and teach them eloquently and forcibly, warning their hearers of their sins, pointing out their danger—and pleading with them to lay hold on Christ and life eternal. And yet—for all this, they are themselves unconverted! They preach what they never felt, they teach what they never knew by experience. Brother ministers, I allude not to you any more than to myself, but of all men that live we are most called upon to watch lest our very office should help us to be hypocrites—lest our position as teachers should bring upon us a double curse! Do not let us seek the salvation of others and lose our own souls! To preach Christ

and not to have Him—to tell of the Fountain, and not to be washed in it—to speak of Hell, and warn men to escape it, and yet go there ourselves—God grant it may never be so with any of us!

But, mark you, the point of this warning comes to many here who are not altogether ministers. You are not preachers, but you are Sunday school teachers, tract-distributors, Bible women, or city missionaries. Then hear you the same warning! Will you go round with those tracts from house to house and yet have no religion in your own houses? O miserable souls! Who has required it at your hands to teach others of God when you are not reconciled to God yourselves? What can you teach those children in the Sunday school? I say, what can you teach those children, when you yourselves are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity? May not the very words you spoke to your classes today, rise up against you in the Day of Judgment and condemn you? Do not be content to have it so. Do not point out the right way to others, yet run in another road yourself! Do not set others in order and slay yourselves!

I have another picture to look upon—it represents A CAREFUL PARENT. Many who may not have been included under other descriptions will be mentioned here. You love your children well and wisely. As far as this world is concerned, you are careful and prudent parents. You were very watchful over them in their childhood, you were afraid that those infant sicknesses would take them to the grave. How glad you were, dear mother, when once again you could lift the little one from the bed and press it to your bosom, and thank God that it was recovering its health and strength! You have denied yourself a great deal for your children. When you were out of work and struggling with poverty, you did not so much grieve for yourselves as for them—it was so hard to see your children needing bread. You have been so pleased to clothe them, so glad to notice their opening intellect and you have, many of you, selected with great care places where they will receive a good education. And if you thought that any bad influence would come across their path, you would be on your guard at once. You wish your children to grow up patterns of virtue and good citizens—and you are right in all this. I wish that all felt as you do about their families and that none were allowed to run loose in the streets, which are the devil's school.

Now, as you have been so very careful about your children, may I ask you—ought not your own soul to have some thought bestowed on it, some anxiety exercised about it? It is a child, too, to be educated for the skies, to be nurtured for the Father's House above. Look in the baby's face and think of the care you give to it—and then turn your eyes inwardly upon your soul and ask, "What care have I given to you, my Soul? I have left you unwashed, unclothed, unhoused. No blood of Christ has fallen on you, my Soul. No righteousness of Christ has wrapped you. For you, my Soul, my poor, poor Soul, there is no Heaven when you must leave this body. For you there is no hope but a fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation! My Soul, forgive me that I have treated you so ill. I will now think of you and bow my knee and ask the Lord to be gracious to you." I wish I could call upon you personally and press

this matter upon you. Think that I am doing so! When you reach home, think that I am following you there and saying to you, "If you care for your children, care for your soul." Look at the boys and girls sleeping in their cots, tonight, and if you are unconverted, say to yourself, "There they lie, the dear ones, they are little sermons to me. I will remember what the preacher said when I look at them. My God, my Father, I will turn to You—do turn me, and I shall be turned."

The last of my crayon sketches is one which may concern many. It is that of THE OUTWARD RELIGIONIST who yet is regardless of his own soul. It is the oddest and strangest of all that there should be such people. I have met with Protestants, flaming Protestants, I might add, raving Protestants who, nevertheless, know no more about Protestantism than about the genealogy of Greek gods! And were they questioned as to what it is that was protested against by the Reformers, they would guess wide of the mark. Yet are they very concerned that our glorious constitution in Church and State should be "thoroughly Protestant"—though I cannot for the life of me see what difference it would make to them! If they have no faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, what matters it to them how a man is justified? There are others who are "Dissenters to the backbone," but yet sinners to their marrow! To ungodly men I say solemnly, What matters it what you are in these matters? In all probability, the side which has the honor of your patronage is a loser by it! If you are leading bad lives, I am very sorry that you are Dissenters, for you injure a good cause. What fools you must be, to be so earnest about religions in which you have no concern!

Many, again, are very orthodox, even to being strait-laced and yet are unbelievers. If the preacher does not come up to their weight and measure, they denounce him at once and have no word bad enough for him. But now, my Friend, though I cannot say that I am altogether sorry that you think about doctrines and churches, let me ask you—Is it wise that you should set up for a judge upon a matter in which you have no share? You are vociferous for setting the church in order, but you are destroying your own soul! If these things belonged to you, I could understand your zeal about them. But since you have nothing to do with them, (and you have not if you have no faith), why do you look after other people and let your own salvation go by default? It may be a very important thing to somebody how the Duke of Devonshire may lay out his estate at Chatsworth, but I am sure it is not important to me, for I am in no degree a part proprietor with his grace. So it may be very important to some people how such-and-such a doctrine is taught—but why should you be so zealous about it when you are in no degree a part proprietor in it unless you have believed in Jesus Christ?

What startles me with some of you is that you will cheerfully contribute for the support of a Gospel in which you have never believed! There are those of you here to whom I am thankful for help in Christ's service. You put your hand into your pocket and are "generous to the Lord's cause." But how is it that you do this and yet refuse to give Jesus your heart? I know you do not think you are purchasing His favor by your money—you know better than that—but why do you do it? Are you like those builders who helped Noah to build the ark and then were

drowned? Do you help to build a lifeboat—and being yourself shipwrecked, do you refuse the assistance of the lifeboat? You are strangely inconsistent! You keep God's Sabbaths, and yet you will not enter into His rest! You sing Christ's praises and yet you will not trust Him. You bow your heads in prayer and yet you do not pray! You are anxious, too, sometimes, and yet that which would end all your anxiety, namely, submission to the Gospel of Christ, you will not yield! Why is this? Why this strange behavior? Will you bless others and curse yourselves?

I speak to the whole of you who as yet have not believed in Jesus and I ask—What is it with which you are destroying your souls? Every unbeliever is an eternal suicide—he is destroying his soul's hopes. What is your motive? Perhaps some of you are indulging a pleasurable sin which you cannot give up. I entreat you, cast it from you! Though it is dear as the right eye, pluck it out! Or useful as the right arm, cut it off and cast it from you! Suffer no temporary pleasures to lead you into eternal destruction! Escape for your life! Sweet sin will bring bitter death—may God give you Grace to cast it away!

Or is it some deadly error with which you are destroying your soul? Have you a notion that it is a small thing to die unsaved? Do you imagine that, by-and-by, it will all be over and you can bear the temporary punishment? Dream not so! Not thus speaks the Infallible Word of God, though men would thus buoy up your spirits and make your forehead brazen against the Most High! It is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! God grant that you may not run that risk and meet that fate!

Or perhaps some self-righteous trust holds you back from Christ. You can destroy yourself with that as well as with sin. To trust to ourselves is deadly—only to trust to Jesus is safe. I will explain that to you and have done. Inasmuch as we had sinned against God, God must punish us—it is necessary that sin should be punished, or there could be no moral government. Now, in order to meet that case, to have mercy upon men in conformity with justice, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world and became Man and, as Man, He took upon Himself the sins of all His people and was punished for them. And whoever trusts Jesus is one of those for whom Jesus bore the smart, for whom He paid the debt. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you trust your soul with the Christ of Nazareth, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you! Go in peace—your soul is saved! But if you put away from you the Christ who says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," you may be very wise and you may arrange your business very cleverly, but, for all that, you are no wiser than the great fool of my text who set his house in order, and hanged himself! God teach both hearers and readers to be wise before it is too late! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 SAMUEL 15:12-37.**

Verse 12. *And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.* Absalom had, by graft, insinuated himself into the hearts of the children of Israel and led a rebellion against his father David, that he might obtain the crown for himself.

13, 14. *And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee, for we shall not else escape from Absalom; make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.* It must have been a sore peril which compelled so brave a man as David to say to his servants, "Arise, and let us flee."

15. *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king shall appoint.* What a loyal spirit they displayed in the time of trial! Oh, that such loyalty could always be found in all the servants of King Jesus! But, alas, many of His servants pick and choose as to which of His commands they will obey! Some of them will not understand the plain letter of Scripture and others of them know their duty, yet they do it not. There is reason to question whether we are the servants of Christ if we have not the spirit of obedience to Him. Brothers and Sisters, let us search and look in the book of the King's ordinances and see whether we are walking in all of them blamelessly. If we can say that we are, it is well. But I am afraid that there are some of His commandments which we would rather not understand—or if we do understand them, we are not in a hurry to obey them. How easy it is to make excuses for not doing what we have no wish to do! Blessed are those Christians who can say, "Behold, Your servants are ready to do whatever my Lord the King shall appoint"

16-18. *And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women which were concubines, to keep the house. And the king went forth and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.* The king's bodyguard of personal friends who had seen long service with him in the contest with Saul—these kept close to him.

19, 20. *Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, why go you also with us? Return to your place, and abide with the king: for you are a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas you came but yesterday, should I this day make you go up and down with us? Seeing I go where I may, return you, and take back your brethren: mercy and truth be with you.* This was the manifestation of a generous spirit on the part of David and therein he was like the Son of David, who thought more of the safety of His disciples than He did of any way of escape for Himself. Let the same mind be in us which was also in David, and in Christ Jesus, great David's greater Son! And let us look, not only on our own things, but also on the things of others.

21. *And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in what place my lord the king shall be,*

whether in death or life, even there also will your servant be. He was a newcomer, but he was a fine recruit—and when our young converts who have lately joined the Church, have this spirit of loyalty in them, they will make mighty men of valor in the Lord’s army! Whether Christ’s cause be held in honor or in contempt, we will cast in our lot with Him! Whether He is reigning on the earth or His name is cast out as evil, we will share His fortunes. To whom should we go but to Him? And where could we find a better Master than this gracious King under whose banner we have enlisted?

22-26. *And David said to Ittai, go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness. And lo, Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the Ark of the Covenant of God: and they set down the Ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation; but if He thus says, I have no delight in you; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seems good unto Him.* David would run no risks with this sacred treasure—and though it would have been a great comfort to him to have had the Ark of the Covenant with him, yet he cared too much for it to think only of his own comfort. How careful ought we to be of the Truth of God and of the things of God—of which this Ark was but a type! Lord, let us run what risks we may, but we would not expose Your Truth, or Your good cause to any risk.

“Let Him do to me as seems good unto Him.” What a grand spirit there was in David even in his exile! There was a sweet spirit of song in him before his great fall, but that fall broke his voice and he sang more hoarsely ever afterwards. Yet what depth, what volume, what melody and harmony are here—“deep calls unto deep.” What submission and subjection to the Divine will and, withal, what a holy confidence! Let the Lord do as He wills—David feels himself to be less than nothing and submits himself absolutely to the Divine Purpose. It is not easy to get to that way, but we must be brought to it. If we are the Lord’s servants, we must lie passively in His hands and know no will but His. Yet deep waters will have to be passed through before we reach this blessed experience.

27-30. *The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Are not you a seer? Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there comes word from you to certify me. Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the Ark of God again to Jerusalem: and they tarried there. And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.* David probably wept partly because of his troubles, but also because of his sin which the thought of his troubles

doubtless brought to his mind—and especially that sin which he has so deeply deplored in the seven penitential Psalms—and most of all in the 51st Psalm. He wore no royal robe on this pilgrimage of sorrow! And “he went barefoot” up the slopes of Olivet.

31. *And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray You, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.* Ahithophel was David’s choicest friend, companion and counselor, yet he had failed him in his time of need. David could use the weapon of all-prayer when he could use no other—and this is like the flaming sword at Eden’s gate which turned every way. It will slay our foes if they come from Hell. It will drive away Satanic suggestions. It will overcome our adversaries if they come from earth. It will sanctify our afflictions even if they come from Heaven. To know how to pray is to know how to conquer! David checkmated Ahithophel when he said, “O Lord, I pray You, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.”

32. *And it came to pass that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth upon his head.* Here was an immediate answer to David’s prayer, for the very man who alone could deal effectually with Ahithophel, comes to the king!

33-37. *Unto whom David said, If you pass on with me, then you shall be a burden unto me: but if you return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father’s servant hitherto, so will I now also be your servant: then may you for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. And have you not there with you Zadok and Abiathar the priests? Therefore it shall be that what thing soever you shall hear out of the king’s house, you shall tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son, and Jonathan, Abiathar’s son; and by them you shall send unto me everything that you can hear. So Hushai, David’s friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.*

You know the rest of the history, how Absalom took the advice of Hushai and Ahithophel was defeated. God does not always answer prayer quite so rapidly as He did in this case, yet, when His people are in sore straits, they often have prompt replies to their petitions, to encourage their faith and to keep their hope alive in the time of trial!

—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.**

MAHANAIM, OR HOSTS OF ANGELS

NO. 1544

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him.
And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s
host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.”
Genesis 32:1, 2.*

*“And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that
Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of
Ammon and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar
and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought
beds and basins and earthen vessels and
wheat and barley and flour and parched corn and beans
and lentiles and parched seeds and honey and butter
and sheep and cheese of kine, for David and
for the people that were with him, to eat,
for they said, The people are hungry and
weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”
2 Samuel 17:27-29.*

LET us go even unto Mahanaim and see these great sights. First, let us go with Jacob and see the two camps of angels and then with David to observe his troops of friends. Jacob shall have our first consideration. What a varied experience is that of God’s people! Their pilgrimage is over a shifting sand; their tent is always moving and the scene around them always changing. Here is Jacob, at one time contending for a livelihood with Laban, playing trick against trick in order to match his father-in-law. Then he prospers and determines to abide no more in such servitude. He flees, is pursued, debates with his angry relative and ends the contention with a truce and a sacrifice. This unseemly family warfare must have been a very unhappy thing for Jacob, by no means tending to raise the tone of his thoughts, or sweeten his temper, or ennoble his spirit.

What a change happened to him when, the next day, after Laban had gone, Jacob found himself in the presence of angels! Here is a picture of a very different kind—the churl has gone and the cherubs have come—the greedy taskmaster has turned his back and the happy messengers of the blessed God have come to welcome the Patriarch on his return from exile! It is hard to realize, to the full, the complete transformation. Such changes occur in all lives but, I think, most of all in the lives of Believers. Few passages across the ocean of life are quite free from storm, but the redeemed of the Lord may reckon upon being tossed with tempest even if others escape. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Yet trials last not forever—clear shining comes after rain.

Change always works. We pass from storm to calm, from breeze to hurricane—we coast the shores of peace and then we are driven upon the

sandbanks of fear. Nor need we be surprised, for were there not great changes in the life of our Lord and Master? Is not His life as full of hills and valleys as ours possibly can be? We read of His being baptized in Jordan and then and there visited by the Spirit who descended upon Him like a dove—then was His hour of rest. Who can tell the restfulness of Jesus' spirit when the Father bore witness concerning Him, "This is My beloved Son"? But, we read directly afterwards, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." From the descent of the Holy Spirit to dire conflict with the devil is a change, indeed!

But another change followed it, for when that battle had been fought out and the triple temptation had been tried upon our Lord in vain, we read again, "Then the devil left Him and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." In a short space our Lord's surroundings had changed from heavenly to diabolical and again from satanic to angelic. From Heaven to the manger, from walking the sea to hanging on the Cross, from the sepulcher to the Throne—what changes are these! Can we expect to build three tabernacles and tarry in the mountain when our Lord was thus tossed to and fro?

Beloved, you will certainly find that the world is established upon the floods and is therefore ever moving. Never reckon upon the permanence of any joy and thank God you need not dread the continuance of any sorrow. These things come and go and go and come—and you and I, so far as we have to live in this poor whirling world, must be removed to and fro as a shepherd's tent and find no city to dwell in. If this happen not to our habitations it will certainly happen in our feelings. From of old "the evening and the morning were the first day" and, "the evening and the morning were the second day." The alternation of shade and sunshine, of setting and rising are from the beginning. Dawn, noon, afternoon, evening, darkness, midnight and a new morning follow each other in all things. So must it be—there is a need for clouds and showers and morning glories, "until the day break and the shadows flee away," when we shall be fitted to bask in the beams of everlasting noon.

In the case before us we see Jacob in the best of company. Jacob, not cheated in Mesopotamia, but honored in Mahanaim. Jacob, not trying to outwit Laban, but gazing upon celestial spirits. He was surrounded by angels and he knew it. His eyes were open so that he saw spirits who, in their own nature, are invisible to human eyes. He became a Seer and was enabled by the inward eye to behold the hosts of shining ones whom God had sent to meet him. It is a great privilege to be able to know our friends and to discern the hosts of God. We are very apt, indeed, to realize our difficulties and to forget our helps. Our allies are all around us, yet we think ourselves alone. The opposition of Satan is more easily recognized than the succor of the Lord. Oh to have eyes and hearts opened to see how strong the Lord is on our behalf!

Jacob had just been delivered from Laban, but he was oppressed by another load—the dread of Esau was upon him. He had wronged his brother and you cannot do a wrong without being haunted by it afterwards. He had taken ungenerous advantage of Esau and now, many, many years after it, his deed came home to him and his conscience made

him afraid. Notwithstanding that he had lived with Laban so long, his conscience was sufficiently vigorous to make him tremble because he had put himself into a wrong position with his brother. Had it not been for this, he would have marched on to his father, Isaac's, tent with joyful feet!

Dreading his brother's anger, he was greatly distressed and troubled. These angels came to bring him cheer by helping him to forget the difficulties round about him, or lose his dread of them by looking up and seeing what defense and succor awaited him from on high. He had but to cry to God and Esau's 400 men would be met by legions of angels! Was not this good cheer? Have not all Believers the same? Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us! If, this morning, I shall be enabled by the Holy Spirit to uplift the minds of the Lord's tried people from their visible griefs to their invisible comforts I shall be glad. I beg them not to think exclusively of the burden they have to carry, but to remember the strength which is available for the carrying of it.

If I shall cause the timorous heart to cease its dread and to trust in the living God who has promised to bear His servants through, I shall have accomplished my desire. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge and therefore no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and even the arch-enemy himself shall be bruised under our feet. In treating of Jacob's experience at Mahanaim we will make a series of observations. First, God has a multitude of servants and all these are on the side of Believers. "His camp is very great," and all the hosts in that camp are our allies. Some of these are visible agents and many more are invisible, but, none the less, real and powerful. The great army of the Lord of Hosts consists largely of unseen agents—of forces that are not discernible except in vision or by the eyes of faith.

Jacob saw two squadrons of these invisible forces which are on the side of righteous men. "The angels of God met him," and he said, "This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim," (two camps), for there a double army of angels met him. We know that a guard of angels always surrounds every Believer. Ministering spirits are abroad, protecting the princes of the blood royal. They cannot be discerned by any of our senses, but they are perceptible by faith and they have been made perceptible to holy men of old in visions. These bands of angels are great in multitude, for Jacob said, "This is God's host"—a host means a considerable number and surely the host of God is not a small one.

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." We do not know what legions wait upon the Lord, only we read of "an innumerable company of angels." We look abroad in the world and calculate the number of persons and forces friendly to our Christian warfare, but these are only what our poor optics can discover—the half cannot be told us by such means. It may be that every star is a world, thronged with the servants of God who are willing and ready to dart like flames of fire upon Jehovah's errands of love.

If the Lord's chosen could not be sufficiently protected by the forces available in one world, He has but to speak or will and myriads of spirits from the far-off regions of space would come thronging forward to guard the children of their King. As the stars of the sky, countless in their ar-

mies, are the invisible warriors of God. "His camp is very great." "Omnipotence has servants everywhere." These servants of the strong God are all filled with power—there is not one that faints among them all—they run like mighty men, they prevail as men of war. A host is made up of valiant men, veterans, troopers, heroes, men fit for conflict. God's forces are exceedingly strong—nothing can stand against them. Whatever form they take, they are always potent, even when God's host is made up of grasshoppers, cankerworms and palmerworms, as in the Book of Joel, none can resist them and nothing can escape them.

They devoured everything! They covered the earth and even darkened the sun and moon. If such is the case with insects, what must be the power of *angels*? We know that they "excel in strength," as they "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word." Rejoice, O children of God! There are vast armies upon your side and each one of the warriors is clothed with the strength of God! All these agents work in order, for it is God's host and the host is made up of beings which march or fly according to the order of command. "Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path." All the forces of Nature are loyal to their Lord. None of these mighty forces dreams of rebellion! From the blazing comet which flames in the face of the universe to the tiniest fragment of shell which lies hidden in the deepest ocean cave—all matter yields itself to the supreme Law which God has settled.

Nor do unfallen intelligent agents mutiny against Divine decrees, but find their joy in rendering loving homage to their God. They are perfectly happy, because consecrated. They are full of delight, because completely absorbed in doing the will of the Most High. Oh that we could do His will on earth as that will is done in Heaven by all the heavenly ones! Observe that in this great host they were all punctual to the Divine command. Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him. The Patriarch is no sooner astir than the hosts of God are on the wing. They did not linger till Jacob had crossed the frontier, nor did they keep him waiting when he came to the appointed rendezvous—they were there to the moment! When God means to deliver you, Beloved, in the hour of danger, you will find the appointed force ready for your succor.

God's messengers are neither behind nor before their time. They will meet us to the inch and to the second in the time of need, therefore let us proceed without fear, like Jacob, going on our way even though an Esau with a band of desperadoes should block up the road. Those forces of God, too, were all engaged personally to attend upon Jacob. I like to set forth this thought—"Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him." He did not *chance* to fall in with them. They did not happen to be on the march and so crossed the Patriarch's track. No, no! He went on his way and the angels of God met him with design and purpose. They came on *purpose* to meet him—they had no other appointment. Squadrons of angels marched to meet that one lone man! He was a saint, but by no means a perfect one—we cannot help seeing many flaws in him, even upon a superficial glance at his life and yet the angels of God met him.

Perhaps in the early morning, as he rose to tend his flocks, he saw the skies peopled with shining ones who quite eclipsed the dawn. The heavens

were vivid with descending lusters and the angels came upon him as a bright cloud, descending, as it were, upon the Patriarch. They glided downward from those gates of pearl, more famed than the gates of Thebes. They divided to the right and to the left and became two hosts. Perhaps the one band pitched their camp behind, as much as to say, "All is might in the rear, Laban cannot retain; better than the cairn of Mizpah is the host of God." Another squadron moved to the front as much as to say, "Peace, Patriarch, with regard to Esau, the red hunter and his armed men—we guard you in the van."

It must have been a glorious morning for Jacob when he saw not one, but many morning stars! If the apparitions were seen in the dead of night, surely Jacob must have thought that day was come before its time! It was as if constellations mustered to the roll call and clouds of stars came floating down from the upper spheres. All came to wait upon Jacob, on that one man—"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him," but in this case it was to one man with his family of children that a host was sent. The man, himself, the lone man who abode in covenant with God when all the rest of the world was given up to idols, was favored by this mark of Divine favor. The angels of God met him!

One delights to think that the angels should be willing and even eager, troops of them, to meet one man! How vain is that voluntary humility and worshipping of angels which Paul so strongly condemns. Worshipping them seems far out of the question—the fidelity lies rather the other way—for they do us suit and service and are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation? They serve God's servants. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?" But this He *has* said, first, to the Only-Begotten and then to every Believer in Christ! We are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty and these ministering ones have a charge concerning us! As it is written, "they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

I have shown you that Believers are compassed about with an innumerable company of angels, great in multitude, strong in power, exact in order, punctual in their personal attention to the children of God. Are you not well cared for, oh you sons of the Most High? Those forces, though in themselves invisible to the natural senses, are manifest to faith at certain times. There are times when the child of God is able to cry, like Jacob, "The angels of God have met me." When do such seasons occur? Our Mahanaims occur at much the same time as that in which Jacob beheld this great sight. Jacob was entering upon a more separated life. He was leaving Laban and the school of all those tricks of bargaining and bartering which belong to the ungodly world.

He had breathed too long an unhealthy atmosphere. He was degenerating—the heir of the promises was becoming a man of the world. He was entangled with earthly things. His marriages held him fast and every year he seemed to get more and more rooted to Laban's land. It was time he was transplanted to better soil. Now he is coming right away. He has taken to tent life. He has come to sojourn in the land of promise, as his fathers had done before him. He was now to confess that he was seeking a city and meant to be a pilgrim till he found it. By a desperate stroke he

cut himself clear of entanglements, but he must have felt lonely and as one cast adrift. He missed all the associations of the old house of Mesopotamia, which, despite its annoyances, was his home.

The angels come to congratulate him. Their presence said, "You are come to this land to be stranger and sojourner with God, as all your fathers were. We have, some of us, talked with Abraham, again and again and we are now coming to smile on you. You remember how we bade you goodbye that night, when you had a stone for your pillow at Bethel? Now you have come back to the reserved inheritance over which we are set as guardians and we have come to salute you. Take up the non-conforming life without fear, for we are with you. Welcome! Welcome! We are glad to receive you under our special care."

Then was it true to Jacob, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house, or brother, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life." This brotherhood of angels must have been an admirable compensation for the loss of the fatherhood of that churlish Laban! Anything we lose when we leave the world and what is called, "society," is abundantly made up when we can say, "We have come unto the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven and unto an innumerable company of angels."

Again, the reason why the angels met Jacob at that time was, doubtless, because he was surrounded with great cares. He had a large family of little children and great flocks and herds and many servants were with him. He said, himself, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I am become two bands." This was a huge burden of care! It was no light thing for one man to have the management of all that mass of life and to lead it about in wandering style. But look! There are two companies of angels to balance the two companies of feeble ones. If he has two bands to take care of, he shall have two bands to take care of him. If he has double responsibility, he shall have double assistance.

So, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in positions of great responsibility and you feel the weight pressing upon you, have hope in God that you will have double succor and be sure that you pray that Mahanaim may be repeated in your experience so that your strength may be equal to your day. Again, the Lord's host appeared when Jacob felt a great dread. His brother Esau was coming to meet him armed to the teeth and, as he feared, thirsty for his blood. In times when our danger is greatest, if we are real Believers, we shall be specially under the Divine protection and we shall know that it is so. This shall be our comfort in the hour of distress. What can Esau do with his 400 men, now that the hosts of God have pitched their tents and have assembled in their squadrons to watch between us and the foe?

Can you see the horses of fire and chariots of fire around about the chosen servant of God? Jacob ought to have felt calm and quiet in heart and I suppose he was when he saw his protectors. Alas, as soon as he lost sight of them, poor Jacob was depressed in spirit again about his brother,

Esau, lest he should slay the mothers with the children! Such is the weakness of our hearts! But let us not fall into the grievous sin of unbelief. Are we not without excuse if we do so? In times of great distress we may expect that the forces of God will become recognizable by our faith and we shall have a clearer sense of the powers on our side than ever we had before! O Holy Spirit, work in us great clearness of spiritual sight!

And, once again, when you and I, like Jacob, shall be near Jordan, when we shall just be passing into the better land, then is the time when we may expect to come to Mahanaim. The angels of God and the God of angels both come to meet the spirits of the blessed in the solemn article of death. Have we not, ourselves, heard of Divine revealings from dying lips? Have we not heard the testimony so often, too, that it could not have been an invention and a deception? Have not many loved ones given us assurance of a glorious revelation which they never saw before? Is there not a giving of new sight when the eyes are closing? Yes, O heir of Glory, the shining ones shall come to meet you on the river's brink and you shall be ushered into the Presence of the Eternal by those bright courtiers of Heaven who, on either side, shall be a company of dear companions when the darkness is passing and the Glory is streaming over you! Be of good cheer! If you see not the hosts of God *now*, you shall see them hereafter when the Jordan shall be reached and you cross over to the promised land.

Thus I have mentioned the time when these invisible forces become visible to faith and there is no doubt whatever that they are *sent* for a purpose. Why were they sent to Jacob at this time? Perhaps the purpose was first, to revive an ancient memory which had well-near slipped from him. I am afraid he had almost forgotten Bethel. Surely it must have brought his vow at Bethel to mind, the vow which He made unto the Lord when he saw the ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Here they were! They had left Heaven and come down that they might hold communion with him. I like the dream at Bethel better than the vision of Mahanaim for this reason, that he saw the Covenant God at the top of the ladder—here he only sees the angels. Yet there is a choice pearl in this latter sight, for whereas at Bethel he only saw angels ascending and descending, he here sees them on the earth by his side, ready to protect him from all harm.

How sweetly do new mercies refresh the memory of former favors and how gently does new Grace remind us of old promises and debts. Brother, does not your Mahanaim point to some half-forgotten Bethel? Judge for yourself. Should our glorious God give you, at this time, a clear view of His Divine power and of His Covenant faithfulness, I pray that the sight may refresh your memory concerning that happy day when you first knew the Lord, when you first gave yourself up to Him and His Grace took possession of your spirit. Mahanaim was granted to Jacob, not only to refresh his memory, but to lift him out of the ordinary low level of his life. Jacob, you know, the father of all the Jews, was great at huckstering—it was his very nature to drive bargains. Jacob had all his wits about him and rather more than he should have had, well answering to his name of “supplanter.”

He would let no one deceive him and he was ready at all times to take advantage of those with whom he had any dealings. Here the Lord seems to say to him, "O Jacob, My servant, rise out of this miserable way of dealing with Me and be of a princely mind." Such should have been the lesson of this angelic visit, though it was ill-learned. Jacob was prepared to send off to Esau and call him, "My Lord Esau." He was ready to cringe and bow and call himself his servant. He went beyond the submissiveness which prudence suggests into the *abject subjection* which is born of *fear*. The vision should have led Jacob to stand upon higher ground. With bands of angels as his bodyguard, he had no need to persist in his timorous, petti-fogging policy.

He might have walked along with the dignified confidence of his grandfather Abraham. There is something better in this life, after all, than policy and planning—faith in God is far grander! A coward's scheming never becomes the favorite of Heaven. Why should he fear who is protected beyond all fear? Esau could not stand against him, for Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts, was on his side! O for Grace to live according to our true position and character—not as poor dependents upon our own wits or upon the help of man—but as grandly independent of things seen because our entire reliance is fixed upon the unseen and eternal! Jacob as a mere keeper of sheep has great cause to fear his warlike brother, but as the chosen of God and possessor of a heavenly guard he may boldly travel on as if no Esau were in existence!

All things are possible with God. Let us, then, play the man. We are not dependent on the things that are seen. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live. Cursed is he that trusts in man. Trust in God with all your heart. He is your infinite aid. Do right and give up calculations. Plunge into the sea of faith! Believe as much in the invisible as in the visible and act upon your faith. This seems to me to be God's objective in giving to any of His servants a clearer view of the powers which are engaged on their behalf. If such a special vision is granted to us, let us keep it in memory.

Jacob called the name of that place Mahanaim. I wish we had some way in this western world, in these modern times, of naming places, and children, too, more sensibly. We must either borrow some antiquated title, as if we were too short of sense to make one for ourselves, or else our names are sheer nonsense and mean nothing. Why not choose names which should commemorate our mercies? Might not our houses be far more full of interest if around us we saw memorials of the happy events of our lives? Should we not note down remarkable blessings in our diaries to hand down to our children? Should we not tell our sons and daughters, "There God helped your father, Son." "Thus and thus the Lord comforted your mother, Daughter." "There God was very gracious to our family."

Keep records of your race! Preserve the household memoranda! I think it is a great help for a man to know what God did for his father and his grandfather, for he hopes that their God will also be his God. Jacob took care to make notes, for he again and again named places by the facts which there were seen. Jacob named Bethel and Galeed, and Peniel and Mahanaim and other places, for he was a great name giver. Nor were his

names forgotten, for hundreds of years after, good King David came to the same spot as Jacob and found it still known as Mahanaim and there the servants of God of another kind met him, also!

This brings me to my second text. Angels did not meet David, but living creatures of another nature met him who answered the purpose of David quite as well as angels would have done. So just for a few minutes we will dwell upon that second event which distinguished Mahanaim. Turn to the Second Book of Samuel, the 17th chapter, 27th verse. David came to Mahanaim and was met there by many friends. He stood upon the sacred spot accompanied by his handful of faithful friends, fugitives like he was. There apparently was not an angel about that day, yet secretly there were thousands flying around the sorrowing king.

Who is this that comes? It is not an angel but old Barzillai. Who is this? It is Machir of Lodebar. They bring with them honey, corn, butter, sheep, great basins by way of baths and cooking utensils and earthen vessels to hold their food. And look, there are beds, too, for the poor king has not a couch to lie upon. These are not angels, but they are doing what angels could not have done, for Gabriel himself could hardly have brought a bed or a basin! Who is yonder prominent friend? He speaks like a foreigner! He is an Ammonite! What is his name? Shobi, the son of Nahash, of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon. I have heard of those people—they were enemies were they not—cruel enemies to Israel?

That man, Nahash—you remember his name? This is one of his sons. Yes! God can turn *enemies* into friends when His servants require succor. Those that belong to a race that is opposed to Israel can, if God wills it, turn to be their helpers! The Lord found an advocate for His Son, Jesus, in Pilate's house—the governor's wife suffered many things in a dream because of Him. He can find a friend for His servants in their persecutor's own family, even us He raised up Obadiah to hide the Prophets and feed them in a cave—the chamberlain to Ahab, himself, was the protector of the saints and, with meat from Ahab's table, they were fed!

It strikes me that Shobi the Ammonite came to David because he owed his life to him. Rabbah of Ammon had been destroyed, and this man, probably the brother of the king, had been spared. This act of mercy he remembered and when he found David in trouble, he acted gratefully and came down from his highland home with his men and with his substance. Many a good man has found gracious help in his time of need from those who have received salvation by his means. If we are a blessing to others, they will be a blessing to us. If we have brought any to Christ and they have found the Savior by our teaching, there is a peculiar tie between us and they will be our helpers. Shobi of Rabbah of Ammon will be sure to be generous to David, because he will say, "It is by him I live. It is through him that I found salvation from death."

If God blesses you in the conversion of any, it may be that He will raise them up in your time of need and send them to help—at any rate, either by friends visible or invisible, He will cause you to dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Here comes another person we have heard of before, Machir of Lodebar. That is the large farmer who took care of Mephibosheth. He seems to have been a truly loyal man who stuck to royal

families even when their fortunes were adverse. As he had been faithful to the house of Saul, so was he to David. We have among us Brothers and Sisters who are always friends of God's ministers—they love them for their Master's sake and adhere to them when the more fickle spirits rush after new comers. Happy are we to have many such adherents!

They helped the preacher's predecessor—they like to talk of the grand old man who ruled Israel in the olden times and they are not tired of it. And they are the entertainers of the present leader and are equally hearty in their help. God fetches up these Brethren at the moment they are needed and they appear with loaded hands. Here comes Barzillai, an old man of 80 years and, as the historian tells us, "a very great man." His enormous wealth was all at the disposal of David and his followers and, "he provided the king sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim." This old nobleman was certainly as useful to David as the angels were to Jacob and he and his co-helpers were truly a part of God's forces.

The armies of God are varied—He has not one troop alone, but many. Did not Elisha's servants see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire? God's hosts are of varied regiments, appearing as horse and foot, cherubim and seraphim and holy men and holy women. Those who are of the church of God below are as much a part of the host of God as the holiest angels above. Godly women who minister unto the Lord do what they can and angels can do no more. On this occasion Mahanaim well deserved its name because the help that came to David from these different persons came in a most noble way, as though it came by angels.

The helpers of David showed their fidelity to him. He was driven out of his palace and likely to be dethroned, but they stood by him and proved that they meant to stand by him. Their declaration was in effect, "You are we, you son of Jesse and all that we have." Now was the time of his need and now he would see that they were not fine weather friends, but such as were true in the hour of trial. See their generosity! What a mass of goods they brought to sustain David's troops in the day when they were hungry and thirsty! I need not give you the details—your verses read like a commissariat roll of demands. Every actually necessary form of provision is there. How spontaneous was the gift! David did not demand—they brought before he asked!

He had not sent his sergeants around to levy upon the outlying villages and farms—there were the good people—ready-handed with all manner of provisions. Their thoughtfulness was great, too, for they seem to have thought of everything that was needed and, besides, they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness." The heartiness of it all is most delightful. They brought their contributions cheerfully and joyfully, otherwise they would have brought only a meager sort and with less variety of gifts. I infer from this that if at any time a servant of God is marching onward in his Master's work and he needs assistance of any sort, he need not trouble about it, but rest in the Lord and help will surely come, if not from the angels above, yet from the Church below.

Will you look at Solomon's Song, the 6th chapter and 13th verse, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two ar-

mies,” or *Mahanaim*, for that is *literally* how it stands in the Hebrew. In the Church of God, then, we see the company of Mahanaim—the saints are the angels of God on earth as the angels are His hosts above. God will send these upon His errands to comfort and sustain His servants in their times of need. Go on, O David, at the bidding of your Lord, for His chosen servants here below will count it their delight to be your allies and you shall say of them, “this is God’s host!”

And now, to close. While I have shown you God’s invisible agents and God’s visible agents, I want to call to your mind that in either case and in both cases the host is the host of *God*. That is to say, the true strength and safety of the Believer is his God. We do not trust in the help of angels. We do not trust in the Church of God, nor in 10,000 Churches of God all put together, if there were such, but in only God Himself. Oh, it is grand to hang on the bare arm of God, for there hang all the worlds! The eternal arm is never weary, nor shall those who rest on it be confused. “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.”

I said last Thursday night to you that faith was nothing but sanctified common sense and I am sure it is so. It is the most common sense thing in the world to trust to the trustworthy—the most reasonable thing in the world to take into your calculations the greatest power in the world and that is *God*—and to place your confidence in that power. Yes, more, since that greatest power comprehends all the other powers—for there is no power in angels, or in men, except what God gives them—it is wise to place all our reliance upon God alone. The Presence of God with Believers is more certain and constant than the presence of angels or holy men. God has said it—“Certainly I will be with you.” He has said again, “I will not leave you, nor forsake you.”

When you are engaged in Christ’s service you have a special promise to back you up—“Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” What are you afraid of, then? Be done with trembling! Let feeble hearts be strong. What can stagger us? “God is with us.” Was there ever a grander battle cry than ours—the Lord of Hosts is with us? Blessed was John Wesley to live by faith and then to die saying, “The best of all is, God is with us.” Shrink? Turn your backs in the day of battle? Shame upon you! You cannot, if God is with you, for, “if God is with us, who can be against us?” Or if they are against us, who can stand for an hour? If, then, God is pleased to grant us help by secondary causes, as we know He does—for to many of us He sends many and many a friend to help in His good work—then we must take care to see *God* in these friends and helpers. When you have no helpers, see all helpers in God! When you have many helpers, then you must see God in all your helpers. Herein is wisdom. When you have nothing but God, see all in God—when you have everything, then see God in everything. Under all conditions keep your heart only on the Lord. May the Spirit of God teach us all how to do this.

This tendency to idolatry of ours, how strong it is. If a man bows down to worship a piece of wood or stone, we call him an idolater and so he is. But if you and I trust in our fellow men instead of God, it is idolatry. If we give to them the confidence that belongs to God, we worship *them* instead

of God. Remember how Paul said he did not consult with flesh and blood? Alas, too many of us are caught in that snare. We consult far more with flesh and blood than with the Lord. The worst person I ever consult with at all is a person who is always too near me. The Lord deliver me from that evil man, *myself*! The Presence of the Lord Jesus is the star of our night and the sun of our day! He is the cure of care, the strength of service and the solace of sorrow! Heaven on earth is for Christ to be with us and Heaven above is to be with Christ.

I can ask nothing better for you, Brothers and Sisters, than that God may be with you in a very conspicuous and manifest manner all through this day and right onward till days shall end in the Eternal Day. I do not ask that you may see angels, still, if it can be, so be it! But what is it, after all, to see an angel? Is not the fact of God's Presence better than the sight of the best of His creatures? Perhaps the Lord favored Jacob with the sight of angels because he was such a poor, weak creature as to his faith. Perhaps if Jacob had been perfect in his faith, he would not have needed to see angels. He would have said, "I need no vision of heavenly spirits, for I see their Lord." What are angels? They are only God's pages to run upon His errands—to see their Lord is far better!

The angels of God are not to be compared with the God of angels! If my confidence is in God, that He is my Father and that Jesus Christ has become the Brother of my soul and that the Holy Spirit dwells in me according to His own Word, why need I care, although no vision of the supernatural should ever gladden my eyes? Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. "We walk by faith, not by sight," and in that joyous faith we rest, expecting that in time and to eternity the power of God will be with us, either visibly or invisibly, by men or by angels! His arm shall be lifted up for us and His right arm shall defend us.

My heart is glad, for I, too, have had my Mahanaim and in this my hour of need for the work of the Lord to which He has called me I see the windows of Heaven opened above me and I see troops of friends around me. For the Girls Orphanage now to be commenced I see Providence moving! Two camps are around me, also, and, therefore, do I preach to you this day of that which I have seen and known! May the Angel of the Covenant be always with you. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 31:43-55;
32:1, 2; 2 Samuel 17:27-29; Psalm 23.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 34, 674.**

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

[In a few sermons prior to this one, mention of raising sufficient funds to begin construction of the Stockwell Girl's Orphanage on Brother Spurgeon's birthday, June 19th, was encouraged. Perhaps this goal was reached.—eod.]

AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRY FOR A BELOVED SON NO. 1433

Suggested by the loss of the passenger ship, the "Princess Alice."

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe?"
2 Samuel 18:29.***

THIS was said by David after a great battle in which many had been slain and the hosts led by Absalom had fallen to the number of 20,000—perishing not only by the sword, but among the thick oaks and tangled briars of the forest which concealed fearful precipices and great caverns into which the rebels plunged in their wild fright when the rout set in. His father's anxious question concerned his wicked but still well-beloved son, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" He does not appear to have asked, "How have we won the victory?" but, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Not, "Is Joab, the captain of my host, alive, for upon him so much depends?" but, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Not, "How many of our noble troops have fallen in the battle?" but, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

It has been said that he showed, here, more of the father than of the king—more of affection than of wisdom—and that is, doubtless, a correct criticism upon the old man's absorbing fondness. David was no doubt, in this case, weak in his excessive tenderness. But, Brothers and Sisters, it is much more easy for us to *blame* a father under such circumstances than for us to quite *understand* his feelings. I may add, it would be wiser to sympathize, as far as we can, than to sit in judgment upon a case which has never been our own. Perhaps if we were placed in the same position, we should find it impossible to feel otherwise than he did. How many there are at this present moment who have, no doubt, other very weighty businesses, but whose only thought just now is, "Is the young man safe? Is my son safe? Is my father safe? Is my wife safe?"

A vessel has gone down in the river with hundreds on board and weeping friends are going here and there, from place to place, hoping and yet fearing to identify the corpse of some beloved one. They are longing to find one who has not been heard of since the fatal hour and, trembling all the while, lest they should find him or her among the bodies which have been drawn from the cold stream. The one thought uppermost with scores, to-night, is this one—"Is my beloved one safe?" Do you blame them? They are neglecting business and forsaking their daily toil, but do you blame them? A hundred weighty things are forgotten in the one eager enquiry—do

you—*can* you blame them? Assuredly not! It is natural and it is, therefore, I think, but right.

Though, no doubt, David did afterwards show a measure of petulance and of rebellion against God and is not altogether to be commended, yet who that has a father's heart within him would not rather undertake to justify than to censure the aged parent? When the old man asks concerning his son, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" and, finding that he is not, cries, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" we would not, like Joab, go in to him and coarsely upbraid him, however much he might deserve it. We would rather sit down and weep in sympathy with those that feel a kindred anxiety and see if we may not learn something from their sorrow.

If our own anxieties are free in that direction, let us turn them in some other direction which may be useful and tend to the glory of God. Let us first, tonight, consider for a little, this question of anxiety. Then let us think of occasions for its use. And then, thirdly, suggest answers which may be given to it.

I. First, let us think of THIS QUESTION OF ANXIETY—"Is the young man Absalom safe?" And the first remark is, it is a question asked by a father concerning his son. "Is he safe?" The anxieties of parents are very great and some young people do not sufficiently reflect upon them, or they would be more grateful and would not so often increase them by their thoughtless conduct. I am persuaded that there are many sons and daughters who would not willingly cost their parents sorrow, who, nevertheless, flood their lives with great grief. It cannot always be innocently that they do this—there must be a measure of wanton wrong about it in many cases where young people clearly foresee the result of their conduct upon their friends.

There are some young men, especially, who, in the indulgence of what they call their freedom, trample on the tender feelings of her that bore them and frequently cause sleepless nights and crushing troubles to both their parents. This is a crime to be answered for before the bar of God who has given a special promise to dutiful children and reserves a special curse for rebellious ones! All parents must have anxieties. There is never a baby dropped into a mother's bosom but it brings care, labor, grief and *anxiety* with it. There is a joy in the parental relationship, but there must necessarily be a vast amount of anxious care with it throughout those tender years of infancy in which the frail cockle-shell boat of life seems likely to be swamped by a thousand waves which sweep harmlessly over stronger ships. The newly-lit candle is so readily blown out that mothers nurse and watch with a care which frequently saps the parental life.

But our children, perhaps, do not give us most anxiety when they are infants, nor when we have them at school, when we can put them to bed and give them a good-night's kiss and feel that all is safe. The heavy care comes afterwards—afterwards when they have broken through our control—when they are running alone and on their own account. There is much anxiety when they are away from home—when they are out of the reach of our rebuke and do not, now, feel as they once did, the power of

our authority—and hardly of our love. It is then, to many parents, that the time of severe trial begins and, doubtless, many a gray head has been brought with sorrow to the grave by having to cry, “I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me!”

Many a father and many a mother die murdered, not with knife or poison, but by unkind words and cruel deeds of their own children! Many and many a grave may well be watered by the tears of sons and daughters because they prematurely filled those graves by their ungrateful conduct! Let us all think, who still have parents spared to us, how much we owe them! And let it be our joy, if we cannot recompense them, at any rate to give them so much of comfort by our conduct as shall show our gratitude. Let them have such joy in us that they may never regret the anxieties of past years, but may have their hearts made to rejoice that they brought into the world such sons and daughters! If we have had parents who cared for us and anxiously said, “Are they safe?” let us be grateful to God and let us never show that we undervalue His mercy by treating the gift with contempt.

Secondly, this was a question asked about a son who had left his father’s house. “Is the young man Absalom safe?” As I have already said, we have not so much anxiety about our children when they are at home and when the nursery holds them as we have, afterwards, when they are beyond our reach. They have formed their own attachments and have commenced life entirely on their own account. Even if they are in the same town, we are concerned for their welfare. But if they are in another land, we have still more anxious thoughts. Possibly some of you have your sons and daughters far removed from you and I do not doubt that, if it is so, you often start at night with the question, “How fares it with my boy? How is it with my son?”

He is far away there, an emigrant, or a sailor at sea, or in some distant country town engaged in earning his livelihood and you wonder whether he is alive and well. If you know him to be on shore, you would like to know whether he goes regularly to the House of God on the Sabbath. You wonder where he spends his evenings. You wonder into what sort of company he may have fallen; what sort of master or shop mates he lives with and what are the influences of his home. I am quite sure that such anxious questions frequently plow deep furrows across your minds. There are some young men here, tonight, in London, come to live in our great city and I want to kindly remind them of the tender thoughts about them at home—how mother and father, perhaps at this very hour, are thinking of them and praying for them.

They would be glad, probably, to know that their son is where he is, but they might have sorrow if they knew where sometimes he wastes his evenings and where he has begun to spend a part of his Sundays. They would be grieved to know that he is beginning to forget the habits formed at home—that now in the room where there are others sleeping he is afraid to bow his knee in prayer—that the Bible in which his mother wrote his name and concerning which the promise was given that there should be a portion read every day has not been read—and, instead, some book

of very doubtful character has taken its place. Young Friend, some of us who are a little older know your experience of leaving home and we trust you will know *our* experience of having been followed by the prayers and tears of parents who have lived to rejoice that their prayers for us were abundantly answered. May it be so in your case, for, if not, you will go from bad to worse and perish in your sin!

Yet it is very hard for a young man to go down to Hell riding steeple-chase over a mother's prayers! It takes a great deal of energy to damn yourself when a father and a mother are pleading for your salvation! And yet there are some who accomplish it and, when they come into the place of ruin and destruction, surely there shall be a heavier measure meted out to them than to those who were trained in the gutter and tutored in the street—and never knew what it was to be the subjects of parental prayer! O Lord Jesus, You who did raise the widow's dead son, save those sons who are dead in trespasses and in sins! Have mercy on those sons who are, even now, being carried out to be buried in the tomb of vice and corruption! "Is the young man Absalom safe?" may very readily remind us of the anxieties of Christian parents about their sons and daughters when they are away from home.

But there is a touching point about this. It is the question of a father about his *rebellious* son. Absalom—the young man Absalom—why should David be concerned about *him*? Was he not up in arms against David? Did he not thirst for his father's blood? Was he not at the head of a vast host seeking anxiously to slay his father that *he* might wear his crown which he had already usurped? Why, I think David might have said, "Is the young man Absalom *dead*? For if he is out of the way there will be peace to my realm and rest to my troubled life." But no, he is a father and he must love his own offspring. It is a *father* that speaks—and a father's love can survive the enmity of a son. He can live on and love on even when his son seeks his heart's blood!

What a noble passion is a mother's love or a father's love! It is an image in miniature of the love of God! How reverently ought we to treat it! How marvelously has God been pleased to endow, especially godly people, with the sacred instinct of affection towards their children—an instinct which God sanctifies to noblest ends. Our children may plunge into the worst of sins, but they are still our children! They may scoff at our God. They may tear our heart to pieces with their wickedness. We cannot take complacency in them but, at the same time, we cannot unchild them nor erase their image from our hearts! We do earnestly still remember them and shall do so as long as these hearts of ours shall beat within our bosoms!

I have now and then met with professing Christians who have said, "That girl shall never darken my door again." I do not believe in their Christianity! Whenever I have met with fathers who are irreconcilable to their children, I am convinced that they are unreconciled to God. It cannot be possible that there should exist in us a feeling of enmity to our own offspring after our hearts have been renewed—for if the Lord has forgiven us and received us into His family, surely we can forgive the chief of those who have offended us! And when they are our own flesh and blood we are

doubly bound to do so! To cast off our own children is unnatural and that which is unnatural cannot be gracious. If even publicans and sinners forgive their children, much more must we! Let them go, even to extremities of unheard-of sin—yet as the mercy of God endures forever—so must the love of a Christian parent endure!

If David says, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” we have none of us had a son that has acted one-half so badly as Absalom and we must, therefore, still forgive and feel a loving interest in those who grieve us. At this time I would address any young person who has been a great grief to those at home. Do you treat this matter lightly? Do your parents’ anxieties seem to you to be foolishness? Ah, let me remind you that though your course of life may be sport to you, it is *death* to those at home. You may dry up your heart towards your mother, but your mother’s heart still floods with love to you! You may even count it a joke that you have caused her tears, but those tears are sincere and reveal her inward agony of soul. Can you ridicule such tender affection?

I have known some young people who have fallen so low as to have made mockery of their parents’ piety. It is a horrible thing to do and woe unto those who have been guilty of it! Yet many Christian parents only return prayers and greater affection for such unkindness as this—and still go on to lay their children’s case before God and beseech Him, for His mercy’s sake, to have mercy upon them! Now, erring young man, since there is something human remaining in you, I appeal to your tenderer nature that you will not continue to offend against such marvelous love and will not wantonly go on to trample on such patient forgiveness!

Absalom, if he could have heard his father ask the question, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” was, I doubt not, still bad enough to have rebelled against him. But I hope it is not so with anyone here. No, I trust that when the most willful shall see the deep and true love of their parents’ hearts they will hasten to be reconciled to them and spend the rest of their lives in undoing the ill which they have done. The question of my text is the question of a parent concerning a son who, if he were not safe, but dead, was certainly in a very dreadful plight. “Is the young man Absalom safe?” said David, with all the deeper earnestness because he felt that if he were not alive, he was in an evil case! He has died red-handed in rebellion against his father—into what shades of Hell must his guilty soul have descended?

O Beloved, that is a very serious question to ask about any departed person! Where is he? Is his *soul* safe? I could almost pray that when any die by sudden death, they might be God’s people and that the sinners might escape till they have found Christ. We admire that Christian man who, finding himself with another at the bottom of a coal pit, was about to ascend in the cage. There was only a chance for one, for the basket would hold no more. He had taken his place, but he left it and said to the other miner, “My soul is saved. I am a Believer in Christ. You are not. If you die you are a lost man. Jump into the cage.” Thus he allowed his unconverted companion to escape and sacrificed his own life in his place. If we are, ourselves, in Christ, it would be Christ-like to be ready to die instead of

the unsaved—then should we carry out David’s wish—“Would God I had died for you.”

To die—the bitterness of death is passed where there is a good hope through Divine Grace—but for those to die who have no hope, no Christ, no Heaven—this is death, indeed! I can very well imagine any of you asking very seriously about your sons and daughters, “Are they safe?” when you know that if they have been suddenly taken away they were altogether unprepared. If men and women are unconverted when they die, they will die twice—and the second death is the most to be feared. Are not some of you, my Hearers, in such danger? Dear Friends, where would you be if at this moment the blast of death were to pass through this house and chill your very marrow? If *now* the secret arrow must find a target in some *one* bosom, where would you be if it should be ordained for you? Ask yourself the question and, if you have no hope in Christ, God help you to seek and find forgiveness by the precious blood of Jesus!

Yet, once more, this was a question, alas, which was asked by a father about a son who was really dead at the time when the question was asked! It was late in the day to enquire for Absalom’s safety, for it was all over with that rebellious son. The three darts of Joab had gone through the very heart of Absalom and there, hanging by its hair in the oak, his body dangled between earth and Heaven. He had already been justly executed for his crimes and yet his father asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” It is too late to ask questions about our children when they are dead. I should think that David’s heart must have been pierced with many sorrows at the thought of his own negligence of his children, for there are hints in his life which lead us to fear that, if not altogether an Eli, he was far too negligent in the matter of household management.

We read of one son of his that his father had never denied him anything and I can hardly imagine a man to be a good father of whom that could be said concerning any one of his sons. The practice of polygamy is altogether destructive of proper family discipline and David had erred greatly in that respect. He was also so occupied with public affairs that his sons were allowed too great a liberty. And now he is vainly asking, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” The question is too late! It is of no use to wring your hands if your boy has grown up to be a debaucher and a drunk! Train him while he is yet young and bring him, with your prayers and tears, to Christ while yet a child! Mother, it will little avail you to tear your hair because of a daughter’s dishonor if you have permitted her to go into society where temptations abound!

Let us do for our children what we can do for them while they are little ones. While the warm metal flows, as it were, soft and plastic, let us try to turn it into the right mold—for if it once grows cold, we may beat it in vain—it will not take the desired image and superscription! Oh that those of us who have little children about us may have Grace to train them up in the way they should go, for when they are old they will not depart from it! You cannot bend the tree, but you can twist the sapling—look you well to it! Snatch the opportunity while yet it is before you, lest, when your

children have plunged into sin, or may even have plunged into the Pit, you vex your souls in vain and cry, "Woe is me!"

I shall never forget the anguish of a poor illiterate woman whom I had been the means of leading to Christ. She was rejoicing in Christ when I had seen her before, but when I saw her next she was in great sorrow and bondage of spirit. I said to her, "What troubles you?" She replied, "My children! My children! They are all grown up and they are all ungodly. My husband died and left me a widow with five or six of them. I worked hard morning and night, as you know I must have done, to find them clothes and food. And I brought them up as well as I could but, woe's me, I never thought about their souls. How could I?" she asked, "for I never thought about my own! And now I am saved, but they are all worldly and careless and I cannot undo the mischief."

She told me that touched with a feeling of love to her children, she had resolved to go and speak to each of them about their eternal state. She made her first visit to her eldest son who had a family of children around him. And when she began to tell him about her conversion and her salvation and joy in the Lord, he so cruelly laughed her to scorn that it broke her heart! I did all I could to cheer and comfort her, but I can only say to younger persons who are converted while they have their little ones about them—never let the occasion go, lest you have to cry out at last, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son!"

God grant that this question of anxiety may be asked in time by wise parents and not left till its answer shall smite as does a dagger.

II. Secondly. You have had the question—we are now to speak upon SOME OCCASIONS WHEN THAT QUESTION WOULD VERY NATURALLY BE USED. "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The question would be used, of course, in times like the present, in reference to this mortal life. When a fearful calamity has swept away hundreds at a stroke, such an enquiry is on every lip. On Wednesday morning how many families must have looked down those fearful lists, having been up all night watching and waiting for someone who did not come home? What a dreadful night to spend in watching for son or father, or daughter or mother! And how awful the tidings of the morning!

In the case of a family near my own house, the servant was left at home with one little baby and all the rest of the family went out for a day's pleasure and health-seeking. Nobody has ever come home! Nobody has come to relieve the servant and embrace the child! You may imagine the anxiety of that servant with her little charge, to find master and mistress and the rest never coming home! There is also a case of a mother upstairs with a new-born little one at her side—and her husband and her other children who had gone out, never returned. May we never know such sorrow! Then is the question asked in accents of terror, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Times of disease, also, raise such enquiries. Well do I remember some 24 years ago, when first I came to London, it was my painful duty to go, not only by day, but by night, from house to house where the cholera was

raging. And almost every time I met the beloved friends at Park Street, it was my sorrow to hear it said, "Mr. So-and-So is dead. Mistress A. or B. is gone," till I sickened myself from very grief. It was then most natural that each one should say concerning his relative at a little distance, "Is he still alive? Is he still safe?"

Now, if in any future day the shadow of a disaster should cross your path and you should be in fear that your beloved ones are lost, I pray you, if you are Christian people, exercise faith at such a time and stay yourselves upon God. Remember, if you become so anxious as to lose your clearness of mind, you will not be fit for the emergency. It may be that by retaining calmness of soul you will be of service, but by giving up the very helm of your mind and allowing yourself to drift before the torrent of anxiety, you will become useless and helpless. In patience possess your souls! The world is always in God's hands! The young man Absalom will not die without the appointment of Heaven. Your children are not out of the keeping of the Most High. However dear they are to you and however great their peril, there is One that rules and overrules! Quiet prayer has more power with Him than impatient fretfulness!

If your dear ones are dead, you cannot restore them to life by your unbelief! And if they still survive, it will be a pity to be downcast and unbelieving when there is no occasion for it. "Your strength is to sit still." Remember that you are a Christian and a Christian is expected to be more self-possessed than those who have no God to fly to. The holy self-composedness of faith is one of the things which recommend it to the outside world and men who see Christian men and women calm, when others are beside themselves, are led to ask, "What is this?" and unconsciously to admit, "This is the finger of God." So when you ask the painful question before us, ask it with faith in God!

But, dear Friends, sometimes we have to ask this question about friends and children with regard to their eternal life. They are dead and we are fearful that they did not die in Christ and, therefore, we enquire, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" It is very painful to the Christian minister when that question is put to him and it is not for him to answer it in most cases. As a rule he knows too little of the person to form a judgment. He may, perhaps, have paid a visit or two and he may have been encouraged by a few hopeful words—but what can we judge from a deathbed? It is very easy for a dying person to be deceived and to deceive others. We had better leave judgments and decisions in the hands of God. Those who know all about the person's life and have been in the chamber all the time of his sickness and know more—how should they judge?

I answer, where there has been no previous godly life, where the conversion must have been a very late one and the signs and marks of it are feeble—judge hopefully, but judge honestly. You are allowed to hope, but still be honest and avoid, above all things, the stupidity I have seen in some people of holding up a son or a daughter or a friend for an example when the individual has lived an ungodly life and never showed the slightest sign of Grace while in active life, but merely used a pious expression or two at the last. Hope if you dare, but be very careful of what you say.

To parade the few last words as if they had more weight in them than a long life cast into the other scale is very unwise! It is most injurious to the rest of the family and is apt to make them feel that they may live as they like and yet be considered saints when they die.

I rather admire, though I might not imitate, a father who, on the contrary, when his ungodly son died, said to his sons and daughters, "My dear children, much as I wish I could have any hope about your brother, his whole life was so inconsistent with anything like that of a Christian, that I fear he is lost forever. I must warn you earnestly not to live as he lived, lest you should die as he died." There was honesty in such dealing—honesty to be admired! If you must judge and answer the question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" be not so hopeful as to deceive yourselves and others, but be not so severe as to constitute yourselves judges upon a matter in which you can know, after all, but little, unless the whole life has been before you. In that case you may judge with some degree of certainty, for it is written, "By their fruits shall you know them."

"Is the young man Absalom safe?" is a more practical question when we put it about young people and old people when they are still alive and we are anxious about their spiritual condition. "Is the young man Absalom safe?" That is to say, is he really safe for the future? Is he really safe for this world and for the world to come? We saw him in the enquiry-room. We heard him speak out his anxiety and we marked his tears—but is he safe? Not if he stops there. We have seen him, since then, at the House of God among the most earnest hearers. He leans forward to catch every syllable. He is evidently in earnest but is he safe? Not if he stops there. He is a seeker—there can be no doubt about it. He has now begun to read his Bible and he endeavors to draw near to God in prayer. Is he safe? Not if he stops even there!

He must come to faith in Jesus Christ and really cast himself upon the great Atonement made by the redeeming blood or else he is NOT safe! The question for you Sunday school teachers to ask about your children is, Are they safe? Have they reached the point in which they turn from darkness to light—from the power of Satan to the power of Christ? "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Is he *saved*? That is the point! I believe there is a denomination of Christians who receive into membership those who *desire* to be saved. I will not judge such a plan, but I dare not follow it! To *desire* to be saved is a very simple matter and means little. The point is *to be saved*. That is the question and over it all our anxiety should be expended. "Is the young man Absalom"—not *hopeful*, not *awakened* or *convinced*, but is he "SAFE"? Is he SAVED in the Lord with an everlasting salvation?

Hear it, all of you, and answer for yourselves!

III. The third point is to be THE ANSWERS WHICH WE HAVE TO GIVE TO THIS QUESTION—"Is the young man Absalom safe?" This question has often been sent up by friends from the country about their lads who have come to London—"Is my boy Harry safe? Is my son John safe?" Answer, sometimes—"No, no. He is not safe. We are sorry to say that he is in great danger."

I will tell you when we know he is not safe. He is not safe if, like Absalom, he is at enmity with his father. Oh, no. He may attend a place of worship and he may profess to pray—and he may even take upon himself the name of a Christian—but he is not safe if he is at enmity with his parents! That will not do at all. Scripture says, “If a man loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” The words are quite as forcible if we read *father* instead of brother. If a man love not his own parents on earth, how can he love his Father who is in Heaven? No, no! He is not safe!—

“Is the young man safe?”

Well, no. We have seen him lately in bad company. He has associated with other young men who are of loose morals. He prefers to spend his evenings where there may be bare decency in the songs and the conversation, but scarcely more. No, the young man Absalom is not safe there. He may be very moral, himself, but he will not long remain pure if he goes into such society. If you sit among coals, if you do not burn yourself, you will blacken yourself! If you choose bad company, if you are not absolutely made to transgress as they do, yet you will damage your reputation. No, the young man Absalom is not safe. And he is not safe because he has taken to indulge in expensive habits. “Absalom prepared him,” it is said, “chariots and horses, and 50 men to run before him.” This extravagance was a sign of evil.

A youth who lavishes money upon needless luxuries is not safe. Certain young men of London with small salaries, manage to cut a superb figure and we fear that something wrong lies behind it. Their plain but honest and respected fathers certainly would not know them if they were to see them in full array. It is a bad sign when young men go in for dash and show beyond their position and means. Of course, every man’s expenditure must be regarded with reference to his income and station in life. I am not touching upon the style of men of rank and fortune, though even *there* a vain-glorious appearance is the index of evil! But there are some young fellows scarcely out of their teens, or who have scarcely ended their apprenticeships, whose pocket money must be easy to count, who, nevertheless indulge themselves in all sorts of extravagances. And when I see them doing so I feel sure that the “young man Absalom” is not safe.

Another thing. The young man Absalom is not safe, as you may see, if you look at his personal appearance. We read, “But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his feet even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he cut his hair, (for it was at every year’s end that he cut it because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king’s weight.” When young people are taken up with their own persons and are vain of their hair, their looks and their dress, we are sure that they are not safe, for pride is always in danger! Let young men and women dress according to their stations—we are not condemning them for that.

I remember Mr. Jay saying, “If you ladies will tell me your income to a penny, I will tell you how many ribbons you may wear to a yard.” And I

think that I might venture to say the same! But I notice that when young people begin to be vain of their beauty and fond of dress they are in great peril from various kinds of temptations. There is a canker-worm somewhere in their brain or their heart that will eat up their good resolutions and fair characters! No, the young man with his boasted beauty is not safe! And we are sure the young man Absalom is not safe when he has begun to be vicious. You remember what Absalom did—I need not go into particulars. Now, many a young man, albeit he is not reckoned a bad fellow, has still gone astray in private life and if all secrets were laid bare he would be almost ashamed to sit among respectable people who now receive him into their society. No, he is not safe.

“Is the young man Absalom safe?” No, David, he is not, for the last time we saw him he was in a battle and the people were dying all around him and, therefore, he is not safe. How can he be safe where others fall? Yes, and I saw the young man come out of a low place of amusement late one night and I thought, “No, the young man Absalom is not safe,” for many perish there. I heard of his betting at the races and I thought, “The young man Absalom is not safe, for multitudes are ruined there.” I saw him in loose company one evening and I said, “No, the young man Absalom is not safe—he is surrounded by those who hunt for the precious life.” It is never safe for us to be where other people fall because if they perish, why should not we?

A youth did not see this but answered me fiercely when I pointed out his danger. He said that he knew how to keep himself—it was not to be taken for granted, because he was going in for amusements, that he would become vicious. “Of course,” he said, “there are young fellows who cannot take care of themselves, but I am quite able to look after myself. I can put on the brakes whenever I please. I am happy, but I am not bad! I am free, but not vicious!” Yes, but I wrote down, “The young man Absalom is not safe”—not half so safe as he thinks he is—and all the less safe because *he thinks so much of himself* and is so particularly sure that *he* can conquer where other people perish! No, the young man Absalom is not safe.

Now, the young man is here tonight who will answer to the next description. He is a very nice young fellow. All of us who know him love him and are right glad to see him among us. He is a great hearer and lover of the Gospel Word, but he is not decided. He has never taken his stand with God’s people, confessing Christ as his Lord. “You almost persuaded me to be a Christian,” he has often said, but he is not quite persuaded yet. Is the young man safe? Oh, no! He is very hopeful, God bless him! We will pray him into safety if we can, but he is not safe yet. Those people who were almost saved from the wreck of the Princess Alice were drowned! And those persons who are almost saved from sin are still lost!

If you are almost alive you are dead! If you are almost forgiven you are under condemnation! If you are almost regenerated you are unregenerate! If you are almost a Christian you are without God and without hope—and if you die almost saved you will be altogether lost! O my dear young Brother, I wish that I could answer and say, “Yes, the young man Absalom

is safe. He has taken the decisive step! He has resigned himself into the hands of Jesus and Jesus will keep him to the end.” May the Holy Spirit lead you to this.

A pleasant task remains. I will now answer that question with a happy “Yes.” Yes, the young man Absalom is safe! Why? Well, first, because he is a believer in Christ. He has cast himself upon Jesus! He knew that he could not save himself and so he came to Christ that Christ might save him and he has left himself entirely in the hands of Jesus to be His forever and ever! The young man is saved, for he loves the Gospel! He will not go to hear anything but the Gospel. He sticks to the Truth of God! He knows the unadulterated milk of the Word and he cannot be deceived and led astray with false doctrine, for that he hates. He does not gad about to go and hear this and that, but he knows what has saved his soul and he holds fast the form of sound words. The young man is safe!

I know he is safe, for he is very humble. He is not perfect. He does not say that he is, nor boast of his attainments. He does not need to be the fore horse of the team—he is willing to be placed anywhere so that he can be useful. He often wonders if he is a Christian at all and ascribes it all to Divine Grace. He is a lowly young man and, therefore, he is safe enough, for such the Lord preserves! Moreover, he is very diffident of himself. He is afraid, sometimes, to put one foot before another for fear he should take a wrong step! He is always going on his knees to ask for direction! He waits upon God for guidance and does not dare to do anything without the direction of the Word and the Spirit! He is a prayerful man and, therefore, he is safe, for who can hurt the man who dwells at the Mercy Seat?

He is also a very careful man in his daily walk. He labors to be obedient to the will of God. He aims at being holy—and to be holy is to be safe. Worldlings say that he is a cant and a hypocrite—and thus they have set their stamp on him and marked him as a follower of the despised Redeemer! He is a genuine character, or else they would not persecute him. The people of God love him and he loves them! He dwells among them and says of the House of God—

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

Write home to his father and all his friends, and say, “The young man is safe!” He is in Christ and he is in Christ’s Church and he is seeking to serve God! He is beginning to work for the Master! He is trying to bring souls to Jesus! The Holy Spirit is working in him and by him to the glory of God!

Yes, he is safe enough, for he is “Safe in the arms of Jesus!”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 90.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—90, 566, AND
“SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS” (25—“FLOWERS AND FRUITS”).**

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BRINGING THE KING BACK

NO. 808

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the king back?”
2 Samuel 19:10.***

THIS morning we were indulged with the Master's blessing while considering one of the most delightful subjects that can ever occupy the minds of God's creatures this side of Heaven [Sermon #807, *Good News for Loyal Subjects.*] It was a celestial song, fitter for angels' harps than sinners' tongues. We sang the triumphs of the once rejected but now exalted Son of Man. We lingered lovingly over the guarantees of His sure and blessed kingdom, and fed with delight upon that short, sweet sentence, "He must reign." We tried to show that the Throne of our Lord Christ is settled on a firm foundation, and that His ultimate and undisputed sovereignty over all things in Heaven and earth and Hell is a matter of Divine decree and will be asserted by the Divine power in due time.

We laid the sheaf upon the threshing floor this morning—let us beat out the precious grain this evening. We showed you the pearl, now let us make it a golden setting of practical holiness! The Son of David is assuredly King, and you know it. "Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" Israel had revolted, and set up Absalom against his father—but when the rebel bands had been scattered and Absalom had been slain, the people thought of their old love—they remembered the days when David was the terror of the Philistines and the champion of Israel! Their hearts smote them for their ingratitude to their valiant deliverer, and they said one to the other, "Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the king back?"

There are three sorts of people in this great throng, to each of whom this text might well be addressed. May none of my three arrows miss the mark! I shall endeavor to speak pointedly, and may the Holy Spirit make an effectual application of each word. May I but win a throne for Jesus in any *one* heart, and my joy shall be full!

I. First, my Brothers and Sisters, MANY AMONG US HAVE LOST THE COMFORTABLE PRESENCE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Some have long dwelt in the cold shade of suspended fellowship. Others, for a shorter period, have passed through the cloud. But, surely, the shortest period is

all too long—and those who have lost fellowship must be anxiously pining after its restoration.

Now to such as these, who see no longer the bright and morning star, we say, “Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?” My sorrowing Brother, you have been mourning much concerning your present condition. Sitting down, perhaps, this very afternoon and taking stock of your spiritual estate, you have felt yourself to be in an almost bankrupt condition and you have written bitter things against yourself. Your barometer has been going down, down, down, for the last month or two—from rain to much rain and stormy. It now appears as if it never would ascend again. Upon a review of the past you observe that your prayers have not been so constant nor so fervent as they used to be. In reading the Word, the promises have not been laid home to your heart as once they were, and in attending the means of Grace, you have not so often said with Jacob, “Surely God was in this place.”

You are getting now into a sad condition and all because your eyes have not lately seen the King in His beauty, neither has He brought you into His banqueting house, nor waved over you the banner of His love. You have been turning this forlorn plight over and over and over in your mind, and you have been anxiously searching for the cause of all this withering of your spirit. You can see that the cause does not lie in Him but in yourself. You perceive that your David has not forsaken *you*, but that you have forsaken *Him*, and set up some fair but false Absalom in His place. He who delivered you has been forgotten, and he who *deceived* you has been followed.

Smooth-spoken sin has made you a traitor to your liege Lord. The luxuriant tresses of Absalom were nets to catch the shallow men of Israel, and Satan has taken care to find suitable snares for *you*. You know this, and you mourn it, and the temptation is to continue morbidly meditating upon the sin and its cause and consequences until despair burns its horrible brand into the spirit. My business tonight is to remind you that all your lamentation over your folly will not of itself remove the disease. Your remedy does not lie within *you*, but beyond and above yourself! It is a good thing to discover where the mischief lies and to lament it, yet the *real cure* for it does not lie in lamentation—it lies in seeking, again, the face of your Lord! “Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?”

The royal hand brings health and cure—healing is to be found nowhere else in earth or Heaven. Go, then, to Jehovah-Rophi, the healing Lord! Oh, if you do but get Him back, your sorrow and sighing will flee away! Though everything else should be dark and doleful, His Presence is enough, by itself alone, to make a gala day in the heart!—

***“Midst darkest shades if He appears,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul’s bright morning star,
And He my rising sun.”***

If your soul has been nipped with the frosts of a long and dreary winter. If the Sun of Righteousness does but manifest His meridian splendor, your summer will return at once! Let the King come and all His court will follow—all the Graces display themselves where the Lord of Grace is revealed. One word, then, to you who are under backslidings and declensions—play not with side issues and secondary remedies—but go straightforward to the root of the matter! Turn your whole soul to your absent Master, and make this your one business—to bring the King back to His palace and throne in your heart.

Ah, I can well imagine what lies Satan will tell you! He will insinuate that you are no child of God, for if you were your love would never grow so cold. He will whisper accusingly that never was any of the whole family of God so lifeless, so graceless as you are. He will say to you, “Your religion is a sham. Your enjoyment is a delusion! You never were born again—you felt a little excitement and you thought you were converted, but you were not. Your repentance was not deep enough. Your faith is not the faith of God’s elect.” He will tear up, one after another, all your comfortable experiences even as the wild boar out of the wood rends up the vines, till he will reduce your soul to a howling wilderness of doubt and fear.

How can you best meet this roaring lion? Will you try by your own wit to answer this accuser of the Brethren? Will you try to prove your experience to be right and his insinuations to be false? If you are wise, you will attempt nothing of the kind, for at that sport Satan can play better than you—and as fast as you set up your evidences he will knock them down again. There is a surer and safer method, and when I see you forgetting it, I enquire in the words of the text, “Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?” Why not tell the case to Jesus? *That* is the true answer to the adversary—answer him by your Advocate! If you can regain the comfortable Presence of Jesus, your evidences will all be seen in His light. Satan himself will not be able to disturb the conviction of your mind that you are a child of God when your Lord again kisses you with the kisses of His lips, and you drink of His love which is better than wine.

I can readily conceive that your legal tendencies will suggest to you, “Now, having fallen into this condition, seeing that it is very doubtful whether you are saved or not, you should labor after salvation by being more zealous and more devout.” Thus may you hear the voice of a deluding spirit, gendering unto bondage, crying out, “You must attend to religious observances and ordinances! You must mortify the flesh in this di-

rection, and deny yourself in that, and then, by degrees, you will come back to your old comfort and peace of mind.”

This all might be very good advice if it were not thrust into an improper place and made to be a foundation for renewed confidence. To thrust out declension by a legal spirit is for Satan to cast out Satan, which cannot be! God will not have His child’s face washed in the scalding water of the Law. Let the child of God beware of being brought into legal servitude in which he will find himself wearily working for life and slavishly toiling for salvation—for then he will be a mere slave and will be ready to die in the wilderness like Hagar and her cast out son—instead of enjoying the liberty of the child of the promise who dwells forever in the Father’s house.

Always beware, dear Friends, of any instruction or direction which would withdraw you from the Cross as the sole and simple ground of your comfort. Duties, I trust, you will never neglect. Services and ordinances, I trust, will always be very precious to you. But, when you have lost your comfort, you might as well search for fire beneath the ice as look for comfort in *duties*. And you might certainly as well turn over the dunghill and look for a diamond as search within *yourself* for jewels of consolation. “Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?” for if you bring King Jesus back He will be made of God unto you *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*—you shall find in Him all you need.

As Charles Wesley puts it so sweetly in the hymn—

**“You, O Christ, are all I want;
More than all in You I find.”**

If you would obtain all good things in one, seek to win Christ and to be found in Him. Desponding one, your whole business lies with Jesus. You have nothing to do today with attainments and experiences—it is not even desirable to practice self-examinations while you are in despondency—these are to be attended to by-and-by—but just now, while the present stress of weather lasts, your one cry must be—

**“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly.”**

While your boat is tossed about at sea, it is very likely that she needs a new copper bottom, or the deck requires holy-stoning, or the rigging is out of repair, or the sails need overhauling, or 50 other things may be necessary. But if the wind is blowing great guns and the vessel is drifting towards those white-crested breakers—the *first* business of the mariner is to make for the haven at once to avoid the hurricane. When he is all snug in port, he can attend to hull and rigging, and all the odds and ends besides.

So with you, child of God—one thing you must do—and I beseech you do it. Do not be looking to this, or to that, or to the other out of a thou-

sand things that may be amiss—steer straight for the Cross of Christ which is the haven for distressed spirits! Fly at once to the wounds of Jesus, as the dove flies to her nest in the cleft of the rock. May the Eternal Spirit give you joy and peace through believing. “Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?” Perhaps you reply, “We speak not a word of this because we are afraid that the King may have forgotten us.” Oh, cruel thought, concerning so kind a Friend! Hear His own words, “I am God. I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

Your Lord forgotten you?! Ah, you know what you *deserve*, but He will not treat you as your sins demand. Shall Christ forget His people for whom He shed His blood? He has said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” How can He forget what is written there? You have played the harlot and gone away from your first Husband, but He says, “Return, return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you.” You may forget the nuptial tie which binds you to your Lord, but He neither forgets nor doubts it, but plainly affirms, “I have espoused you unto Myself in faithfulness.” And He declares that He hates putting away. Though we believe not, He abides faithful.

But you say, “How shall I return to Him? I feel ashamed to come to Him yet again.” And well you may! But the best color you can wear upon your face, when you enter His Presence, will be that crimson of holy shame. Remember that bad as you are, you are not now worse than when you first came to Him. You were then without a spark of Divine Grace, or love, or holiness. You were once an *enemy*, *dead* in trespasses and sins, but His great love loved you even then. You may well be ashamed, I say, and yet I entreat you let not this shame keep you from coming just as you are to Him. Ho, you negligent Believers, you lax professors, you lukewarm ones, Christ has not cast you away! This is His message to you—let me give it to you—it was first delivered to the Church at Laodicea when it had declined into the same state as your own, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”

He is not gone! He waits at your door, and knocks at it, longing to enter. “If any man open to Me, I will enter in and sup with him, and he with Me.” This is the cure for your lukewarmness, and this cure awaits you now, for Jesus Christ is in this very House of Prayer knocking at the gate of your heart! O let Him enter, and in a moment all that you have bewailed of coldness and of lethargy will disappear at His return. “Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?” I hope the answer to that question is not that you have forgotten Him. Forgotten the man of Gethsemane, crimsoned with His own blood for you? Forgotten Him whose hands were pierced for you? Forgotten Him who bore the crown of thorns, and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost for you? Forgotten that faith-

ful Lover who ever since He ascended above the stars has never ceased to intercede for you, and such as you? Oh, shame, indeed!

But you have not quite forgotten Him, I know you have not. Perhaps, however, you have grown so dead in spirit that you hardly *care* about His company. What shall I say to you? Shall I remind you of—

***“Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still”?***

I bear my testimony tonight that there is no joy to be found in all this world like that of sweet communion with Christ! I would barter all else there is of Heaven for that! Indeed, that *is* Heaven! As for the harps of gold, and the streets like unto clear glass, and the songs of seraphs, and the shouts of the redeemed—one could very well give all these up, counting them as a drop in a bucket—if we might forever live in fellowship and communion with Jesus. When it is our great privilege to press close to our Lord, and to feel that He loves us and that we love Him, and to lean our head upon His bosom—*then* it is glory this side of Jordan!

Do you not long for it? Have you forgotten the garden of nuts and the beds of spices? O willful, wayward heart, have you forgotten the banqueting house, and the day when you came up from the wilderness leaning on your Beloved? You said then, “I will never forget You.” Then your heart warbled to itself in words like these—

***“O my Soul, forget no more
The Friend who all your misery bore.
Let every idol be forget,
But, O my Soul, forget Him not.”***

And now what are you doing to be so negligent of your Beloved? O fickle heart, are you not ashamed at your inconstancy! Content without your Lord? A spouse content without her husband? A child happy away from its father’s face and under its father’s frown? Chide your hearts, my Brothers and my Sisters, if you know any joy apart from Jesus!

I would gladly provoke you to a sacred jealousy. I would fill you with an insatiable hunger and thirst for your Beloved. I would not merely exhort you to speak a word to bring Him back, but I would persuade you to send up an incessant cry—

***“When will You come unto me, Lord?
O come, my Lord, most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I’m blest when You are near.”***

Remember, the heavenly Lover will come. He forgives the past—He is ready to come to you *now*. Come to Him, dear Brother, just as you did at first. Fall flat on your face before His dear Cross, and then look up to His streaming wounds, and say, “Jesus, I rest in You.” Give yourselves up to Him afresh. It is a good thing to renew your youth by renewing your fel-

lowship. See at this season how the year has put on its new mantle of green! Mark how all animal and vegetable nature has been refreshed! Will you not renew your youth like the eagle? Will you not begin again? I trust you will, and if so, the true way to revive is to speak a word concerning bringing the King back.

II. Secondly, and briefly. MANY PROFESSORS DO VERY LITTLE TO BRING CHRIST BACK TO HIS KINGDOM IN THE WORLD—and to these we have a message. I do not think that, on the whole, anybody could fairly describe us as being a lazy Church. But there never was a hive of bees without there being at times a few drones to be turned out. And if, when I am speaking tonight to the drones, any of you should feel that my rebuke comes rather sharply home, I am sure I shall be delighted—for it is my sincere desire to be personal.

There are a number of Christians whose whole Christianity seems to lie in attending two services each Sunday, but do nothing for Jesus. Some of them think one attendance at worship quite enough for the Sabbath—they are such very easily satisfied people that one meal in a week satisfies their spiritual appetite. It is an improvement, certainly, when we see others regular in coming twice, and some who drop in on weeknights to the lecture. But there are numbers who never attend the Prayer Meeting and so deny the Lord Jesus even the cheap love-token of their prayers. Well, perhaps He is no great loser, for those who do not come to the Prayer Meeting are not the best of Church members, but a great deal the worst, as a rule.

I speak not of those who are debarred lawfully—servants, or even masters whose business detains them—but there are persons who might come if they would, but forsake the assembling of themselves together. These miss the blessing, and deserve to do so, seeing that they deny the Lord even the poor aid of their prayers. How many there are who do nothing for our King! They are not Sunday school teachers. They are not street preachers. They do not take a tract district. They are not subscribers, at least to any great extent, to anything! They have no object that is dear to them in connection with the Church. They are very glad to see all the work go on well—like a man on the top of the coach, they enjoy the riding—but they have no care to draw an ounce, no inclination to assist in any respect.

Now, to such I say, if you are, indeed, Christians, “Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?” Have you no desire whatever that Jesus Christ should reign among the sons of men? If you, as a Christian man, have a right to be idle, every man has a right to be the same! And then where would be the exertions of the Christian Church, and, humanly speaking, where would be anything like the extension of Messiah’s kingdom? God works by *instruments*, and those instruments are *men and*

women who are themselves saved, and who, being saved, are set to fulfill the loving duty of telling out the plan of salvation to others!

And so you have tied up your tongue, and given up all idea of being of any service to the Church of God? My dear Brother, my dear Sister, were you never, then, redeemed by blood? “Yes,” you say, “I hope so.” Why, then, you are not your own! On your own showing you are bought with a price, and how can you, then, live as though you were your own? My dear Brother, my dear Sister, do you owe Christ *nothing*? “Oh!” you tell me, “I owe him *everything*.” Then, I beseech you, do not live as one who is devoid of gratitude! Selfishness in religion is detestable—that selfishness which makes us think—“Well, if we get to Heaven, that is all we need. We shall not worry ourselves about the concerns of the Church, nor take upon ourselves any labor in connection with the Master’s vineyard.”

Ah, but if your Master had said so! Ah, but if your precious Redeemer had said, “Heaven is glorious, and I cannot have more honor than I possess already! I will not go to earth to toil and suffer to redeem the sons of men!” then might you have had an excuse and an example in your selfishness and sloth! But since He loved not Himself, but gave Himself to suffer, bleed, and die—my Brothers and Sisters—I do entreat you be instant in season and out of season for your Master, that He may be glorified in you!

“Oh, I could not do much,” says one. Then do what you can! No *one* flower makes a garden, but altogether the fair blossoms of spring create a paradise of beauty. Let all the Lord’s flowers contribute in their proportion to the beauty of the garden of the Lord. “But I am so unused to it.” Then, my Brother, that is a very powerful reason why you should do *twice* as much, so as to make up for your past idleness. “Oh, but I am afraid nothing would come of it.” What has that to do with you? *God* has promised a blessing and if the blessing should not come in your day, yet, if you have done what the Master bade you, you will not be blamed for lack of success.

“Sir,” asks another, “will you give me some work to do?” No, I will not, for if you are good for anything you will find it for yourself. In such a place as London, for people to go to their minister to know what they are to do seems to me to be the height of absurdity! What work can you do? Put your hand out and begin, for there is plenty within reach. Your own unconverted child, whose face you kiss tonight, is to be the first object of your labors. Begin to educate your family of Christ, and pray for the salvation of your own households. What spheres you may find in the neighborhoods in which you dwell! They swarm with immortal souls and abound in sin! The fields are white unto the harvest.

Some of you may not be able to work by using your tongue, then use your purses—use whatever gift God has given you—only do it! Never let it be said that you do not “speak a word of bringing the King back.” Oh, when the King comes to His own, how happy shall they be who fought His battles! I think I see Him riding through the streets of this glad world with great acclaim! The angels are in mighty squadrons—ten thousand times ten thousand ranged on either side—and all men are bowing before Him, scattering His path with roses, and crying, “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!”

Oh, it will be such satisfaction, then, to feel, “I helped to bring that chariot forth! I helped to subdue the kingdom unto Him!” But where will you go—where will you hide your heads—you who have done nothing at all for Him? You cannot, you dare not in your consciences share in the splendor of His triumph because you took no part in the rigor of His campaigns—you cannot participate in His crown because you did not share in His Cross!

III. Thirdly, and lastly. There is a large class here, I fear, a sadly large class WHO ARE REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS OF THIS KING. Oh, how I wish they would say a word, if it were only such a word as the poor publican said, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” for such a word as that would bring the King into their hearts. O you who do not love Christ listen to me a minute! You are God’s creatures. God has a *right* to your services. It is God’s *power* that keeps the breath in your nostrils—you are, therefore, obliged to God for your very existence!

You would not like it if your child never expressed its obligations to you—why do you not admit your obligations to your Father? “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib,” but you do not know and you have lived all these years without considering. Is it not unjust? Does not conscience tell you that you do wrong to rebel against the God that made you? Christ is your lawful King and you are a rebel against Him tonight. He is so good a King. He is no tyrant! His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and yet you will not have Him. If He were a despot, and made you wretched, I could excuse your revolt—but Immanuel is all love, and they that serve Him are happy.

O why, then, do you revolt more and more, and go astray and break His blessed bands, and resist His sweet love? Let me reason with you. You are God’s, and you confess it. He supplies you with life, and you acknowledge it. He is a good God and you will not deny it. O why, then, do you not seek to make Him your King? Why do you not yield yourselves up to Him? Why do you not give your hearts to His service and be His forever? Perhaps you have been like Shimei, who cursed king David, and you are

afraid that Jesus will never forgive you. But David forgave Shimei, and Jesus is ready to forgive you! He delights in mercy!

I do believe that the harps of Heaven never give to Christ such happiness as He has when He forgives the ungodly, and says, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." Then it is that He performs the darling action of His life, that which is nearest and dearest to His soul. Oh it is you who are hard to confess! It is not Christ who is hard to forgive! It is your own heart that is hard towards Him, not His heart that is hard towards you! He is ready to receive you, young woman, now! He is ready to receive you, gray-headed offender, and to receive you now! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Never has He cast out any, and never will He! Come and try Him! O that you would come and try Him now! Why speak you not a word of bringing Him back, when He is so willing to come back and to forget the past, and to abide with you forever?

Perhaps you say, "I would gladly have Jesus Christ in my heart to save me. I would gladly trust Him and be His, but how am I to get Him *back*?" There is nothing for you to do whatever—

***"All the doing was completed,
Long, long ago."***

You have only to accept what Christ has finished. If you will but trust Christ, you are His. Now see, I cast myself with all my weight, and lean upon this rail, not fearing that I shall fall. Do just so with Christ. Lean wholly on Him! If you do so, Heaven and earth may pass away, but His promise to you shall never pass away or fail! Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back again?

Hasten to your chamber. Kneel by that bedside and confess your sins. Tell Him that you have lived all these years a stranger to Him. Tell Him that you have often choked conscience, and stifled the admonitions of His Spirit. Ask Him to forgive you, for you bemoan your offenses, and then look to Him and see all the bitter griefs and horrid pangs which He endured upon the bloody tree, and say, "I do believe that there is merit enough in what Jesus suffered to put away my sin. It needs not that I should die, for Jesus died in the sinner's place as a full vindication of Divine justice, and on His Atonement I fix my trust."

I trust that some of you may speak a word to bring the King back. Oh, I have watched some of you with a tender interest—now hoping and then fearing! O when shall the case be decided and the question settled forever? I sometimes think I know a great deal about you. As I stand in this watchtower and look down, there is a curious kind of telegraphing that goes on between me and some of you—for I have looked at you, and you have looked at me—and I have read the signals which your eyes have given me! I know that you have been almost persuaded, but you cannot

decide for the Lord and His service. With some of you it is *fear* that keeps you back. You still think it too good to be true that such great offenders as you are should be forgiven. Jesus is a great God and a great Savior—O great Sinner, He is just the Redeemer that can save *you!* Come, then, and rely upon Him.

Others of you are held back by temptations from evil friends. You get outside the Tabernacle and somebody meets you who chats and laughs away all impressions. Others of you, in the week, go into bad society and the devil ensnares you. O that the snare might be broken and that you might escape! By the sweet persuasions of the Holy Spirit I beseech you, decide for Christ tonight! May His eternal Spirit constrain you to open your heart's doors to Jesus, and your heart being once given to Him, your state is divinely secure—

***“I know that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power,
What I’ve committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.
Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father’s face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.”***

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“CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN”

NO. 2284

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1892.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 20, 1890.**

***“As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”
2 Samuel 23:4.***

WHAT a blessing it is to the country if, at certain seasons, we have a time of clear shining after the rain! Under some circumstances, nothing but sunshine will save the crops that are ready to be reaped, and there will be great loss to the farming interest, and, indeed, to us all, unless we have the sunshine when it is needed. We must never neglect to pray to the Lord who alone can give, to the natural world, clear shining after rain.

Our text, however, has a higher meaning than this. These words occur in David’s description of a fit, true and wise ruler. All rulers have not been fit to rule. Indeed, in David’s day, and in most Oriental countries at the present time, the King, the Sultan, the Emperor, the Shah, all rule for themselves. Their one great business is to extort all the taxes they can from the people and to give them as little as possible in return. To fleece the sheep is the great business of an Oriental shepherd—to feed them does not seem to enter into his mind. But David says that where rulers were wise, just, and upright, their country flourished. A good ruler, especially in the East, where he had everything in his own hands when he came to the throne, was like “a morning without clouds,” and the people round him grew like the grass in times when, after heavy showers of rain, the sun looks forth with cheerful rays and warms the earth into verdure. We may be thankful, dear Friends, that we do not know what despotic rule means, for, good as it may occasionally happen to be, it may also be intolerably bad. Let other lands have what masters they will, but let us be free and our own masters, as we still are, thanks to the gracious Providence of God that has smiled upon us.

The beautiful simile by which David sets forth the rule of a good king, I will first take out of its connection and look at it for other purposes. And then I will put it back into its connection and use it as David used it, only in a higher sense. The beautiful picture that he draws is produced by a combination—first rain, and then, clear shining after rain—and the most flourishing condition of spirituality is produced by the same two causes! It comes as the result of a combination of rain and sunshine. We shall never rise to the highest spiritual state by having all rain and no sunshine. Although we may prefer it, we shall never attain to the fullest fruit-bearing by having all sunshine and no rain. God puts the one over against the other, the dark day of cloud and tempest against the bright day of sun-

shine and calm—and when the two influences work together in the soul, as they do in the natural world, they produce the greatest degree of fertility and the best condition of heart and life.

I intend to use the text in four ways. First, I shall show you how the “clear shining after rain” is manifested *in the heart of the convert*. In the second place, I shall point out to you how this “clear shining after rain” often produces the best condition of things *in the soul of the Believer*. Thirdly, I shall prove to you that our text makes a very happy combination *in the ministry of the Word*. And, in closing, I shall speak to you about the “clear shining after rain” *in the ages to come*.

I. I shall begin by showing you how the “clear shining after rain” is manifested IN THE HEART OF THE CONVERT.

When a man is truly converted, do you know how it is manifested? All conversions are not alike, there is a very great difference between them. Some are very definite—you can tell to a minute when the man is converted. Others are very indistinct—there is a long previous preparatory process and you cannot say exactly when the man turned to God. If you get up tomorrow morning and do not look at the Almanac, but look toward the east and take a pencil and try to mark down exactly when the sun rises, I think it is highly probable that you will not manage the task correctly. On an extremely clear and bright morning, you might tell, to a second, when the rim of the sun appeared above the horizon, but we do not often have clear, bright mornings nowadays. We have not seen the sun much, lately and, probably, you would find that he was up before you had made the pencil mark—and most likely you would learn that he was up before you had discovered when he rose!

So it is often in the workings of Divine Grace. Some men have the Light of God, but they cannot tell when the Light first came to them. Let none of you imagine that you are not converted because you do not know the hour when it occurred! Otherwise, you would be as foolish as I should be if I said to some old lady, “How old are you?” “Well, I am somewhere about eighty.” “But when was your birthday? Do you not remember your birthday?” “No, Sir, I do not.” Suppose I were to tell her she was not *alive* because she did not know her birthday? I would be very foolish! And if you say to yourself, “Soul, you were never born again because you do not know when the event happened,” you will be very foolish, too! If you can say, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, but now I see,” be satisfied and grateful, even though you cannot tell when the great miracle was worked. Conversions, then, are not all alike.

Yet, as a usual rule, *the work of Grace begins in the heart with a time of gloom*. Clouds gather—there is a general dampness round about—the soul seems saturated with doubt, fear, dread. There is something coming, but the soul knows not what. It feels that it is very sinful and deserves whatever punishment God may send. Perhaps some of you are passing through that stage of experience just now. You get sadder and yet more sad every day and yet you do not quite know why. You used to go to the theater and you enjoyed it, but you went the other night, and it seemed very dreary to you, as indeed it is. You went off to some joyful company, where you used to be very merry, but you seemed quite out of spirits—you could not join

in their merriment and you were glad to get home. Something ails you! Something ails you. Yes, the clouds are gathering over your head. That is how Grace usually begins to work in the soul that God means to save and bless.

After the clouds, in the next place, *the rain falls*. The real work of the Spirit of God often follows upon an inward depression of spirit. Now you really begin to repent of sin! Now are you sorry for the past. Now you begin to sigh and cry for Christ. You wish you knew Him—you wish you loved Him. Tears begin to drop or, if they do not actually fall from your eyes, yet there is inward weeping and your soul is getting moist, now, with deep contrition, hatred of sin, dread of God’s anger, the fear of the wrath to come, and a wish to lay hold on eternal life. Now the rains, the blessed rains, have come and softened your heart! If we were to water all the fields in summer, when the sun is shining with a scorching heat, it would be of very little use, indeed. An Irish friend of mine once said that he had carefully noticed that it did not rain when the sun was shining, but that, whenever it rained, there were always some clouds to keep the sunshine off. There is a great truth in what my friend said! Rain becomes doubly precious to the earth when all the surroundings are suitable for its reception. All the atmosphere becomes damp. Whereas, if rain could fall when all is dry and warm, mischief might come of it. Well, now, God’s Holy Spirit loves to come and work a congenial atmosphere in man—a holy tenderness, a devout heartbreaking—then, with the clouds, He brings a heavenly rain.

What comes after the rain? Then *the sun shines*—“clear shining after rain.” I am describing the conversion of a man to God, not in a cast-iron style, for, as I have already told you, experiences differ. But, as a rule, after the softening, saturating influences of the Holy Spirit have come to the man, then the clouds go, the rain ceases and there comes clear shining. The sun shines out. The man perceives that he is a sinner, but that Christ has come to save him. He sees his own blackness, but he believes that Christ can make him whiter than snow. He mourns his own rebellions, but he rejoices that he is made a reconciled child and admitted into the sacred family. Now look at him, his face is full of brightness. He looks as if he would like to dance, he feels so happy! His sins are washed away, he has believed in Jesus, he has rested in Christ’s finished work and now he is as merry as the birds in May. His cheerful exclamation is, “I feel like singing all the time,” for he is enjoying the clear shining after the rain!

I should like to encourage any here, tonight, who are going through the rain time. Believe me, it will not last forever. You shall yet say, “Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone! The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come.” It will come all the sooner to you if you at once come to Christ. Look to Him as lifted up on the Cross for you and you are now saved! God grant that you may do so at once!

Well, now, what happens after this? We have come as far as the clear shining after rain—what follows this? Why, *then everything grows*! The grass is sure to grow when we have mist and heat together—and when a soul, having felt its need of Christ, at last beholds the light of His Countenance—then it begins to grow. I love to see young converts with all the

freshness of their new-born faith. They have not borrowed their language from other people. I like to see them with their zeal—they are not quite so prudent as some of us older people are. You will find that they are doing this, and doing that, and doing the other good thing, and the prudent people tell them not to do too much! My dear young Friend, do not listen to them! There is many an old saint who has been spokesman for the devil when he has tried to hold a young Christian back from doing more for Christ! I had a number of kind friends when I began laboring for the Lord and especially when I began to preach—and these kind friends provided me with an unlimited quantity of blankets—and very wet blankets they were, too!

They were afraid that I should get too hot in my Master’s service, so they were always ready with wet blankets to dampen my ardor. I do think that, sometimes, when Satan wants to repress the zeal of young converts, he finds more efficient servants among good people than he does among bad ones! Brothers and Sisters, let the young converts grow! They will not grow too fast. Let them serve God zealously! They will not do too much for Him. Let them burn with vehement zeal! There are plenty in the world who will try to cool it down. God grant that our young friends may be able to resist that chilling influence and may still be full of earnest might and spiritual strength in the service of their Savior!

That, then, is the usual method of the progress of a convert—clouds, rain, clear shining and then growth. We pray that we may see this process perfected in very many!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to use the text in another way. This “clear shining after rain” often produces the very best condition of things **IN THE SOUL OF THE BELIEVER.**

You will see this state of things manifested in *trial followed by deliverance*. Were you ever nearer to God, my dear tried Friend, than after a very heavy affliction, when God appeared for you and brought you out of it? I can only speak for myself, but I must say this—In times of prosperity I have not always felt so much the nearness of God as in moments of great sorrow and tribulation, when I have sobbed myself to sleep upon the breast of my dear Lord. And when I have awaked and have found that He has done for me what my helplessness could not do and has set me free from my foes, and made me to rejoice in His name, then have I seen Him. Then have I known Him, when He has delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. See, then, dear Souls, you who love the Lord, you may expect to have trials, and you may expect to have deliverances, too, for your very best state of growth comes of the two together—rain and then the clear shining after the rain—trial followed by deliverance.

Next, this experience is realized in *humiliation of self followed by joy in the Lord*. It is a very healthy thing for a man to be made to know himself. And if he is made to know himself, he will have no cause for boasting. There is not a corner in our nature in which we may sit down and say, “I have something which is good within me which I have myself worked out.” If there is anything good in us, it is the *gift* of God! The Lord often takes us down into our own natural hearts and there conducts us from cham-

ber to chamber, that we may see our own filthiness and vileness. I suppose that nobody here knows quite how bad he is by nature. If we could fully know it, our reason might reel. We might never be able to hope, again, if we fully knew all the depravity of our hearts!

Now, for a man to have plenty of rain to make him realize how evil he is, and, coupled with that, a full conviction of the greatness and blessedness of Christ and of his own interest in Christ to see sin and then to see the one great Sacrifice for sin—to see our death and then to see Christ, our life—this is the very best condition for any of us to be in! I would not have you glory in Christ, I do not think you can rightly glory in Christ, unless you also sorrow because of your own distance from Him and your own natural depravity. It is for our good to have this twofold experience. We might get presumptuous if we were allowed to always enjoy the clear shining! We might then think that there was no reason to watch, no further cause to carry the shield of faith, or to wield the sword of the Spirit! To preserve us from this evil, we often get taken down a notch or two. We are made to see our necessity, that we may value, all the more, the riches of God in Christ Jesus. Put those two together—deep self-humiliation and highly prizing our precious Christ—and you have a condition of things in which a child of God can grow!

Next, I think there is another happy combination of rain and clear shining, namely, *tenderness mixed with assurance*. I like to meet with that man, whom Mr. Bunyan speaks of in his “Pilgrim’s Progress,” who was, above many, tender of sin. He was not afraid of lions, but he was dreadfully afraid of sins. He was not afraid of Vanity Fair—it had no charms for him—but he had some doubts about his interest in the Celestial City. I love to see a child of God who, like Mr. Fearing, is very tender of sin. I know some who hardly dare put one foot before the other, for fear they should do wrong. I do not like this tenderness to become *morbid*, for then it causes unnecessary grief, but yet holy tenderness is a very beautiful characteristic of a child of God when it has mingled with it the clear shining of a full assurance that enables the man to say, “I know whom I have believed; I know I am God’s child; I know that none shall pluck me from His hand.”—

**“More blessed, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in Heaven.”**

These two things, tenderness and assurance, operating together, will produce a high state of spiritual fertility. It is a dreadful thing to see the full assurance of some men! I heard of one man, in a public-house, saying, as he drank, I do not know how many glasses of beer, “I may take what I like, for I am a child of God.” O wretched blasphemer! What worse blasphemy could there be than such talk as yours? He who is a true child of God says to himself, “I do not ask how far I may go without crossing the line of safety, but I do ask that I may be kept from temptation and sin, and if there are some things that I might do, if they expose me to temptation, or expose others to it, I will have nothing to do with them.” Give me, then, a man of tender heart, who, at the same time, mixes full assurance with his tenderness! He is the man who will bring forth fruit unto holiness—and in the end—everlasting life!

Once again, our text suggests to us the blending of *experience and knowledge*. Read the Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith. By all manner of means get a clear view of the Doctrines of Grace, so that you can state them to others and know why you hold them firmly, yourself. But, remember, if you do not experience them in your own heart—if you do not know the power of them in your own life—you know nothing at all about them! Dry doctrine, without the dampening of the Spirit of God, may only make fuel for your eternal destruction! When a man accommodates his religion up in the attic of his head and never takes it down into the parlor of his heart, that man’s religion is in vain! We must experience the power of the Gospel in our own souls if it is to be of real service to us—

**“True religion’s more than notion,
Something must be known and felt.”**

It is very nice to talk about Christ, but do you trust Him as your Savior? It may be very easy to speak about the new birth, but have you felt it? When you get these two things together, first the rain of gracious experience, and then the clear shining of intellectual knowledge of Scripture—then will you bring forth fruit unto God!

I must not linger longer over this very interesting point of the clear shining after rain as illustrated in the soul of the Believer.

III. But now, in the third place, I think, dear Friends, our text makes a very happy combination IN THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

You know that, nowadays, people will listen to anybody, provided that he is a clever preacher. I am often astonished at congregations that had a grand old man for their preacher, who always preached them good sound doctrine, and I thought their Church was a very tower of orthodoxy—but when he dies, they pick somebody who preaches, no one knows what—but, then, he does it *cleverly*, and so they have him, to their eternal disgrace, and to the injury of the Church of God!

What is a good sermon? Well, I am very much of the opinion of old King George the Third, in his latter days. The old man knew the Truth of God and loved it. And when he used to hear his fine court chaplains, he would often go out of the chapel and say, “It will not do—nothing to feed a soul on.” Old George had not too much brains, but all the things he did know, he clung to. Another time, as he went out of the chapel, he would say, “That will do. That will do—a soul can feed on that!” That was his way of judging a sermon—“Can a soul feed on it?” And if a soul could *not* feed on it, it did not suit George the Third! I hope that it will not suit you, either, unless it stands this test—Can a soul feed on it? You may have the best china service, the silver plate and the damask tablecloth, but if, on the table, there is nothing but dry bones, I would not recommend you go there for dinner! We want something to eat both for our bodies and our souls if they are to be kept healthy.

He who would have a fruitful ministry must have clear shining after the rain, by which I mean, *first, Law, and then Gospel*. We must preach plainly against sin. In our ministry there must be rain—we must have the clouds and darkness, and Divine justice bearing heavily upon the sinner’s conscience. Then comes in Christ Crucified, full Atonement, simple faith,

and clear shining of comfort to the believing sinner! But there must *first* be the rain. He who preaches all sweetness and all love, and has nothing to do with warning men of the consequences of sin, may be thought to be very loving, but, in truth, he is altogether unfaithful to the souls of men! I do not suppose that any of you women can sew without needles. Yet your objective is not simply to get the needle into the stuff, is it? No! You need to get in a bit of cotton, or thread, or silk. Well, now, try whether you can sew with a piece of silk alone! You cannot do it. You must put in the needle, first, must you not? And he who would do any work for God must have a sharp needle as he deals plainly with the sin of man—and he must *then* draw after it the silken thread of the Gospel of Christ! There must be rain, first, and clear shining afterwards.

But, dear Friends, when we come to deal with you, we have to tell you that what we want to see in you is, *first, repentance, and then zeal*—rain, and then clear shining! I am always sorry if my ministry produces men and women who, all of a sudden, seem to become Christians without any sense of sin, without any softening, without any fear of Divine wrath. For I am afraid that those clear shinings *without any rain* will parch the ground, and make it dry—but never cause it to bring forth true fruit unto God. In our ministry, dear Friends, it must not be so. And here I speak to my fellow-Christians as well as to myself. Your ministry may be in the Sunday school, or in street preaching, or visiting the sick, but all true ministry must have rain about it as well as sunshine.

If your service is to be successful, bringing glory to God, there must be in it, *first, prayer, and then, blessing*. You must go forth with prayer. You must go forth weeping, bearing precious seed and, afterwards, there will come the clear shining, when you return rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you! God will bless and prosper your work if you go to it in the spirit of your Savior. But there must be deep anxiety in your soul and great longings and anguish before God if you expect to have the Lord’s blessing resting upon your efforts to serve Him.

I think my text also means *Grace softening and then shining*. I wish that the Lord would visit all His Church with a heavy shower of rain. I mean, by way of softening the Church, making the Church loving in spirit and anxious for souls. What would happen? The Lord would soon visit it with clear shining and we would see conversions as numerous as the blades of grass which spring up in the fields! Oh, come, come, Divine Dew, and rest on this assembly, now, and on this Church all the days of the week! Shine, O Sun of Righteousness, with glorious warmth and power, and we shall soon see a plentiful harvest, to the praise and glory of our God!

This is, I think, the meaning of the expression, “clear shining after rain,” as applied to the ministry of the Word.

IV. I have done when I have said just this much with regard to the clear shining after rain IN THE AGES TO COME.

I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet. Every now and then I see the walls of our city placarded with an intimation that something very wonderful is going to happen in such and such a year. Now, believe me, Brothers and Sisters, it may be, but then it may not be! Whenever I find a Brother quite sure about what will happen on April the 1st, in such and

such a year, I begin to wonder whether he knows anything at all about the subject! I suspect that all those who prophesy in these days, apart from the Sacred Word, are as much to be respected as the Norwood gipsy and no more. And yet I am now going to turn prophet, taking my prophecy out of the Word of God.

And, first, *times of gloom are to be expected*. There has been held, in this city of London, a conference with regard to the establishment of peace. I heartily sympathize with the grand objective of that conference. Oh, that wars might cease unto the ends of the earth! War is the sum of all villainies. There is nothing to be said for it. It is a monstrous thing that men should murder one another wholesale. But there will be no end of war from anything that you and I can do apart from preaching the Gospel of Christ! When the King comes, when Jesus comes, when the King shall reign in righteousness, there will be an end to war—but till then there will be wars and rumors of wars. And when you hear of them, do not be disturbed as though everything was falling to pieces. There will be clear shinings after the rain! Yes, though it is a reign of blood, afterwards He shall shine out who is our Peace, and who will set up an unsuffering Kingdom which shall know no end.

In religious matters, do not expect that the world will go on getting better and better. I think the belief that it is already much improved has a very slight foundation of fact. We have learned the art of hiding sin behind the vestments of hypocrisy, but we are not much better, after all. We have changed the fashion of sin, but the sin is still there. Now, do not expect to see the churches always sound, and religion always spreading. You may see, *somebody* will see, a falling away before the coming of Christ, and a departure from the faith. “The love of many shall wax cold.” It shall come to pass that, if you ask for faith, you will scarcely find it, for, “When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Scarcely. It will be a very rare commodity. But be not distressed even though all men are turned aside from the Christ of God, for there will be “clear shinings after the rain.”

Although times of gloom are to be expected, *an age of light will follow*. There will come a day when Christ shall gloriously reign among His ancients—when the ungodly shall hide themselves in obscure places, the meek shall have dominion in the earth—and the sons of God in that morning shall be acknowledged as the noblest of men. There is to come yet “a thousand years” (whatever that period may mean) of a reign of righteousness, wherein the whole of the earth shall be filed with the Glory of God and become the vestibule of Heaven. Have comfort about that glorious Truth of God!

Now, dear Friend, with regard to yourself, it may be that unless the Lord shall soon come to His Temple, you will grow old and, as you grow old, the clouds will *return* after the rain. You will get into times of infirmity when there will be rain, and rain, and rain, and rain, and, perhaps, little sunshine. Yet expect that, before you die, you will come to the clear shining after the rain. There is a place called the land of Beulah. It lies on the verge of the Jordan, but it also lies, with that little stream before it, on the verge of the heavenly Canaan! That land is full of light and flowers, and I

have heard that, if the wind blows in the right direction, you may hear the music of Heaven in that land—and from a hill in that land you may see the Celestial City!

I have known some old men and women who have reached the land of Beulah. It has been a great delight to me to sit and talk with them in their last days. They have had clear shinings after the rain. They have told me all about the rain, about the children dying, about the wife who was buried long ago, about the poverty they passed through, about the persecution they endured, and so on, and so on. All that is rain. They have never been able to tell me all about the clear shining, but they have said that they felt as happy as they could be out of Heaven, and they had no particular wish about whether they should stay or whether they should go.

I saw, the other day, an old man who had passed his 91st year, and though he looked like little more than a skeleton, it was grand to hear him speak of the faithfulness of God and the doctrines of the Gospel! He was as clear on those points as ever he was and, perhaps, even firmer! It was a great treat to listen to him. I pray that all of us may, in due time, get to the land Beulah, where all is bright and happy—and there may we dwell till the post comes from the King to say that we must pass the stream to joyfully behold our Lord! And, oh, what clear shining after rain will there be when we once get Home, when we behold His face, and when we, like Himself, have risen from the dead and stand perfect and complete in our flesh to behold our God! Oh, the Glory and the bliss of being—

“Forever with the Lord,”

after the rain is over and gone! Go through it! Never be afraid of all the drenching you may get on your way to Glory. Get Home as quickly as you can along the good old road, for, after the rain comes the clear shining. Be this the motto of each one of you from this sweet Sabbath evening hour, “Clear shining after rain.” God bless you all! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON PSALM 32.

A Psalm of David. You can see David all through this Psalm. Here we have David’s sin, David’s confession of sin, David’s pardon. It is a Psalm of David! Oh, that we might, each one, make it our own! It is entitled—Maschil. This is an *instructive* Psalm. The experience of one man is instructive to another. We learn the way in which we should walk and sometimes the way in which we should *not* walk, by observing the footsteps of the flock. The Psalm begins with a blessing.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* I think I hear a sort of sigh of relief, as if the man had been burdened with a load of guilt and now, at last, his sin is put away. And his sigh has more solemn joy in it than if it had been a song—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Beloved, you must know the bitterness of sin before you can know the blessedness of forgiveness! And you must have such a sight of sin as shall break your heart before you can understand the blessedness of the Divine covering, that

sacred cover which hides sin effectually, blots it out, and even makes it cease to be. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Would you not think so, dear burdened Heart, if it ever came to your lot? I hope that it will be so tonight. Do not we think so, who remember the day when Almighty Mercy forgave us our transgression and covered our sin? Indeed we do. This is one of the greatest blessings out of Heaven! Perhaps, for a sort of still soft melody with much of the minor in it, this is the sweetest music in the whole Book, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” Now David must put the same Truth of God in another form. He loves to reduplicate, to repeat again and again a Truth which is very precious to him.

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Here are two reasons for the man’s blessedness—sin is not laid to his charge, and he is no longer deceitful—he no longer tries to palliate and to excuse his sin. He makes a clean breast of it and God, in a higher sense, gives him a clean breast. He acknowledges the Justice of God and God displays His Infinite Mercy to him. Now David tells us how he learned this sacred blessedness. What were the ways by which he went, which ended at last in this Divine sweetness.

3, 4. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* I understand this to have been the feeling of David after his great sin—before he confessed it. He tried to excuse it to his conscience. It has been thought by some that David was, for at least nine months, in a very insensible state. But he does not appear to have been so. All the time until his sin was confessed and acknowledged, he was miserable. Because there was Divine Grace in his heart, sin could not dwell there with comfort. As he would not acknowledge his sin before the bar of God, pleading guilty, and waiting for judgment, as he kept silence, it preyed upon him so that he seemed to grow prematurely old, and that, not only in his skin and his flesh, but his very bones were affected—“My bones waxed old.” Those solid pillars of the house of manhood trembled and were shaken under his awful sense of sin. You cannot be a child of God and sin—and then be happy.

Other men may sin cheaply, but you cannot. If you are a man after God’s own heart and you venture into uncleanness, it will sting you as does a viper—it will burn within your bones like coals of juniper. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.” David did pray, but he did not dare to call it *prayer*. It was like the moaning and groaning of a beast that is wounded, and faint, and near to die. And this terrible pain was upon him always—“For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me.” God has a heavy hand for His sinful children. Other fathers may spoil their children with indulgence, but the Lord will not spoil His children. If we sin, we shall feel the weight of God’s hand. We ought to thank Him for this, for though it brings great sorrow, yet it brings great safety to us. The worst thing that can happen to a man is to be allowed to sin and yet to be happy in it.

One of the best things for an erring Believer is a taste of his Father’s rod. “Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the

drought of summer.” All David’s joy was squeezed out, pressed out, by the heavy hand of God. His flowers ceased to bloom; his fruit was withered; his experience was nothing but a hard drought, without a drop of moisture. When David had gone so far and had played only on the bass strings so long, he said, “Selah,” that is, “Tighten up the harp strings, let us put them in tune again! We are going up to something better now.”

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* Oh, how swift is the Divine compassion! Quick upon the heels of confession came that word from Nathan, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” I can fancy David standing there with the hot tears in his eyes, never so broken down as when his sin was all forgiven! Before he knew that he was pardoned, he stood tremblingly fearful, brokenhearted before God. But when Nathan had said (I will repeat those gracious words), “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die,” oh, what gratitude he felt, and what tenderness, and what hatred of sin!

Dear Hearer, if you are burdened under a sense of sin, go and make confession to God straight away. If you feel very heavy, tonight, at the recollection of some great and grievous offense. If some scarlet spot is on your hands and you cannot get rid of it, go and show it to God! With penitential honesty confess the sin and it shall be forgiven you. “Selah.” Now David puts the harp strings right again. They still seem to suffer from the previous strain and so he says, “Selah” once more. “Sursum corda.” Lift up the heart! Let the whole soul go up to God.

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place.* He had talked, in the first verse, of his sin being covered. Now he not only hides his sin beneath the Divine covering, but he hides *himself* beneath the Divine shelter—“You are my hiding place.” Thus does the Believer sing—

**“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”**

7. *You shall preserve me from trouble.* Lord, if You have taken away the greatest of all troubles, that is, guilt on the conscience. If You have really forgiven me, what trouble have I to be afraid of? “You shall preserve me from trouble.”

7. *You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* If You have pardoned me, there is the making of all manner of music in the fact of my pardon! He that is washed by the precious blood of Jesus is the man to sing! Has not God made a chorister of him? John tells us, in the Revelation, that one of the elders said to him, concerning the white-robed throng, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple.” “Selah.” David must tighten up the strings of his harp, again, for now he wishes to exult in God and to magnify His holy name, as he listens to his Lord’s gracious words.

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way, which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* Here is another blessing. The God who has forgiven the erring of the past will preserve us from erring again! God’s flowers always bloom double. He gives us Justification, but He adds Sanctification. He pardons our sins, but He also makes disciples and scholars of us, and teaches us the art of holiness, which is the noblest art that man can learn! “I will instruct you and teach you in the way, which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.” When we are willing to be guided, we hardly need a word from God—a look is enough, just a glance of His eyes—“I will guide you with My eyes.”

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* Do you need bits and bridles? If you need them, you shall have them. If you will be a horse or a mule, you shall be treated as horses and mules are! There are some Christians that need to be driven with a very sharp bit and they need to have their mouth made very tender, for now they are hard-mouthed and, sometimes, they take the bit between their teeth and try to run away instead of doing God’s bidding! Usually, the rods with which God scourges us are made of reeds grown in our own gardens. When God hides His face from His people, it is almost always behind clouds of dust which they have made themselves. You will have sorrow enough in the ordinary way to Heaven—do not make an extra rod for your own back!

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* This refers to you who are outside the family of God, who do not come under His rod. You are not in His love and favor, for you have no faith in His dear Son. Do not think that you will escape punishment! If the Lord “scourges every son whom He receives,” what will He do to His enemies? “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* He always needs mercy, for he is still a sinner. He shall always have mercy—for his Savior still lives! “Mercy shall compass him about.”

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* Be demonstrative! Let men see that you are happy! “Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” The Psalm is a joyful one, after all. David’s experience has taken him through a deep sense of his own sin, but it has brought him out into an elevated sense of God’s mercy! So he closes the Psalm with the jubilant exhortation, “Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” So let us do this night and forever! Amen.

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ROYAL EMBLEMS FOR LOYAL SUBJECTS NO. 2947

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1863.

*“And He shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises,
even a morning without clouds; like the tender grass springing
out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.”*
2 Samuel 23:4.

EASTERN despots fleece their subjects to an enormous extent. Even at the present day one would hardly wish to be subjected to the demands of an Oriental governments. But in David's time, a bad king was a continual pestilence, plague, and famine—a bane to the lives of his subjects who were under his rule—and plunder of their fields, which he perpetually swept clean to enrich himself with the produce thereof. Hence, a good king was a *rara avis* in those days and could never be too highly prized. As soon as he mounted the throne, his subjects began to feel the beneficent influence of his sway. He was to them “as when the sun rises.” The confusion which had existed under weak governors gave place to settled order, while the rapidity which had continually emptied the coffers of the rich, and filched the earnings of the poor, gave place to a regular system of assessment and men knew how to go about their business with some degree of certainty. It was to them “a morning without clouds.” Forthwith, trade began to flourish, persons who had emigrated to avoid the exactions of the tyrant came back, fields which had fallen out of tillage because they would not pay the farmer to cultivate them began to be sown and the new ruler was to the land as “clear shining after rain,” which makes the tender grass spring up out of the earth!

I fear we do not value as we should, the constitutional government which it is our privilege as Britons to enjoy. Let us look where we may—we need not say to the East only, but to the West, also—we would not wish to change the government under which we live so happily. Let us gratefully acknowledge to God His tender mercy and His goodness in sparing us alike from the refractory elements of a republic and then prodigious exactions of a despotism—and for allowing us to dwell in a quiet and peaceable kingdom, wherein we can sit, “every man under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none making him afraid.” We may say, I am sure, of Her Majesty [Queen Victoria] who is set over us in the order of Providence, that she has been “as the sun when it rises, as a morning without clouds.” Under her generous sway our country has been verdant. As “the earth by clear shining after rain” brings forth the green

herbs, so have our institutions fostered our trade and commerce by the goodwill and gracious Providence of God!

But it is not my objective, at present, to enlarge upon the secular benefits that have fallen to our lot, though I should not think it unworthy of the Christian ministry to pursue a theme which calls for so much gratitude to God and might foster so much good feeling among ourselves. We might make one another feel that there are vast mercies we enjoy which would be more esteemed if better known. Just as we speak of Christ's unknown sufferings, so many of the bounties that we daily enjoy have become so common that we are oblivious of them and, therefore, I might call them our unknown mercies. It well becomes us to lift up our voices and hearts to Heaven and thank God for the happy land and for the happy age in which the lines have fallen to us!

Still, I take it that David was not so much speaking of mere political rulers as of Christ Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose sway is always gracious and full of goodwill! May His kingdom come! "Surely, I come quickly," He cries from Heaven. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," respond those whose love inspires their worship! His Kingdom is "as when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds" and when it shall have been perfectly established upon the earth, all men shall know that the Son of David, whom they once rejected, is He by whom God would make all generations to be blessed forever and ever! May we who have waited and watched for His glorious advent, live when He stands in the latter day upon the earth and may we constitute a part of that glorious harvest, the fruit whereof shall shake like the cedars of Lebanon! Thus we look for the day wherein the Lord shall come in the clouds of Heaven.

I. David says of Christ, HE SHALL BE LIKE THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING, WHEN THE SUN RISES. This He is as King, already, in His Church and as the rightful Monarch in the individual heart of the Believer. Whenever Christ comes into a soul, it is "like the light of the morning when the sun rises."

The light of the morning is joyous. Then all the birds begin to sing and the earth, which is silent at night, save when its stillness is disturbed by stormy winds, or by wild beasts, or by riotous drunken people, becomes vocal with songs from many mouths. So, when Christ comes into the heart, the tuneful notes of the singing birds are heard and the voice of the dove welcomes the gladsome season! Where darkness had brooded before, the sunlight of Christ brings mirth and blessed rejoicing. Oh, what streamers there are in the town of Mansoul when Prince Emmanuel rides through! Happy day, happy day, when Jesus comes into the heart! Save the day when we shall be with Him where He is, I suppose there is no day that is comparable to the first one when we behold Christ and see Him as our Savior and our King!

The rising of the sun is joyous and, besides that, *it is comforting and consoling* to those who have been suffering from ills which night aggravates. "Would God 'twere morning!" has been the cry of many a languishing one tossing on his couch. "Would God 'twere morning!" may

be the cry of many a heart that is exceedingly troubled with the guilt of sin. Ah, let the morning come! Let the watchman say, "The morning comes!" Let the day dawn and the day-star appear in our hearts and there is "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Christ brings joy to cheer and comfort the disconsolate, for He is like the rising of the sun!

And *how glorious is the sun when from its pavilion it looks forth at morn!* Job describes the sunrise as being the stamping of the earth with a seal, as if, when in darkness, the earth were like a lump of clay that is changeable. Then, as it is turned to the light, it begins to receive the impression of Divine Wisdom! Mountain and vale all stream with it till impressed on its surface we begin to perceive the glorious works of God! So, when Christ rises upon the heart, what a glorious transformation is worked! Where there has been no love, no faith, no peace, no joy, none of the blessed fruits of the Spirit, no sooner does Christ come than we perceive all the Graces in blossom! Yes, they soon become fragrant and blooming, for we are made complete in Him. The advent of Christ brings to the heart celestial beauty! Faith in Him decks us with ornaments and clothes us as with royal apparel! Better garments than Dives had, though he wore scarlet and fine linen, does Christ give to His people when He comes to them! And better fare than Dives had, though he fared sumptuously every day, does Jesus bestow upon His saints when He shines into their hearts! Oh, the glory of the sunrise of the Savior on the darkness of the human soul! If a man might rise every morning of the year to look at the rising sun and yet never be tired of it because of the sublimity of the spectacle, I think a man might consider his own conversion every hour in the day and every day of his life—and yet never be wearied with the thrice-Heavenly spectacle of Christ arising over the mountains of his guilt to banish the dense darkness of his despair!

As the sunrise is thus joyous, comforting and glorious, let us remember *how unparalleled it is*—unparalleled because Divine. By no method of illumination can we manufacture such a light as the sun exhibits by its simple rising. O you priests, you come with your incantations and mysteries to make light in men's hearts—and sometimes you strike a spark that does but show the darkness—it dies too soon to be called "the Light of God." And you pile your deeds to Heaven—your cords of good works—you bring your van-load of superstitious observances and vainly try to make an illumination! But before it begins to blaze, it dies out and only a handful of ashes remains to disappoint the expectant ones! But Christ arises and with what boundless majesty He looks abroad! The joy, the peace, the comfort, the confidence, the full assurance, the blissful hope which one ray of Christ's Light gives to the heart of man cannot to be equaled! No, scarcely to be compared with anything else! It is a joy that God only gives us and, thank God, a joy which none can take away!

And, as this sunrise of Christ in our heart is Divine, so likewise *it is Irresistible*. No curtains can conceal the sun from the world when it wills to rise. No tyrant, by any law, can prevent the sun's beams from gilding

the cottage of the poor. Shine it must and will. Like a giant, he comes out of his chamber and where is he that shall wrestle with him? Where are you, O man, who can take the bridle of the sun and bid his coursers stay their race? Until they have climbed to Heaven and then gone down again to bathe their burning legs in the Western Sea, they must, they *will* pursue their onward course, for none can stay them, or say to their mighty driver, "What are you doing?" So, when Jesus comes into the heart—away, you fiend! Your time of flight is come! Away despair and doubt and anything that can prevent the soul from having joy and peace! Thus the eternal mandate runs, "Let that man go free!" Thus says Jehovah to Pharaoh, "Let My people go" and go they must and shall, for the time of their light and their liberty is come! Like the rising of the sun, when it springs forth "as a strong giant, and as a happy bridegroom," even so is Christ Jesus when He rises in the human heart!

The sunrise, moreover, is very much like the coming of Christ *because of that which it involves*. Those rays of light which first forced the darkness from the sky with golden prophecy of day, tell of flowers that shall open their cups to drink in the sunlight. They tell of streams that shall sparkle as they flow. They tell of the virgins that shall make merry and the young men that shall rejoice because the sun shines on them and the darkness of night is fled! And so, the coming of Christ into the heart is a prophecy of years of sweet enjoyment—a prophecy of God's goodness and long-suffering, let night reign elsewhere as it may—yes, and it is a prophecy of the fullness of the river of God, forever and ever, before the Throne of God in Heaven! Do you have Christ, poor Soul? Christ is to you the promise of eternal happiness! You cannot be dark again if Christ has once shone on you! No night shall follow this blessed day! It is a day that lasts forever—

***"Does Jesus once upon you shine?
Then Jesus is forever thine."***

Has Christ appeared to you? Do you trust Him now? Are you reposing only upon His finished work? Then the sun has risen upon you and it shall go down no more forever! The everlasting Joshua bids the sun stand still and today, and tomorrow, though the whole world revolves, that Sun of Righteousness abides to still shine on you with healing in His wings.

II. We must proceed to notice that the Psalmist uses another figure. "EVEN A MORNING WITHOUT CLOUDS."

Brothers and Sisters, there are no clouds in Christ when He arises in a sinner's heart. The clouds that mostly cover our sky come from Sinai, from the Law and from our own legal propensities, for we are always wishing to *do something* by which we may inherit eternal life—but there are none of these clouds in Christ!

There is, in Christ, *no cloud of angry rebuke for the past*. When Jesus receives the sinner, He chides not! "Neither do, I condemn you," is all that He has to say. I thought, when I came tremblingly to Him, that He would at least bring all my sins before me and chide before He sealed my pardon with the kiss of mercy. But it was not so. The Father received the prodigal without a single word of rebuke! He did but say, "Take off his

raggs.” He did but command them to kill the fatted calf that they might make merry—not a word did He speak of his hungry look, or his filth, or of the far country, or even of the harlots with whom he had spent his substance. Christ receives the soul without rebuke, for He is “like a morning without clouds.”

And, as there is no cloud of anger, so there is *no cloud of exacting demand*. He does not ask the sinner to *be* anything, or to *do* anything. That were a cloud, indeed, if He did. A sinner by nature can do nothing and can be nothing, except as Grace shall make him be and do. If Christ did ask anything of you or me, if He did but ask repentance of us, unless He *gave us that repentance*, His salvation would be of no use to us! But He asks nothing. All He bids us do is to take Him as everything—and be nothing ourselves. So, to the empty-handed sinner, He is such a full Christ that we may well say, “He is like a morning without clouds.”

And, as He is without cloud of demand, so He is *without cloud of falsehood*. I know that some say Christ may reject those who have put their trust in Him—that after they are saved, they may yet fall from Grace and perish. Surely that would not be like a morning without clouds. I should see, in the distance, the tempest gathering that might ultimately destroy my spirit. But, no, if you trust Christ, He will surely save you, even to the end. If you put your soul into His hands, there is no fear that He will be false to the sacred charge! He will undertake to be Surety for your soul. He will bring you to His father’s face without hindrance when the fullness of time is come. Trouble not yourselves, O you anxious ones, concerning the future! Does faith reach only to the present? Do you trust Christ only to save you today? I pray you take a larger sweep of confidence and trust Him to save you to the end! If you do so, He will be better to you than your fears would suggest, or than your faith can conceive! To the end He will love you and in the end He will bring you to be like He and to be with Him where He is! Happy is that man who sees Christ “like a morning without clouds.” They who see any clouds in Him make the clouds. The clouds are only in their vision—they are not in His Person. The spots and defects are in themselves—they are not in Him, nor in His work. If you will only trust Him fully, simply, without any admixture of your own merit or confidence, you shall find Him to be equal to the brightest description—a morning without a single cloud!

III. But now, to the last figure. Upon this we intend to dwell at somewhat greater length. David says of Christ the King, that His sway is like CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN, whereby the tender grass is made to spring out of the earth.

We all understand the metaphor. We have often seen how, after a very heavy shower of rain, and sometimes after a continued rainy season, when the sun shines, there is a delightful clearness and freshness in the air that we seldom perceive at other times. Perhaps the brightest weather is just when the wind has driven away the clouds and the rain has ceased, and the sun peers forth from its chambers to look down upon the

glad earth. Well, now, Christ is to His people just like that—exceedingly shining clear when the rain is over.

Sorrow and sadness do not last forever. After the rain there is to come the clear shining. Tried Believer, after all your afflictions there remains a rest for the people of God and if, just now, you are tried and vexed by some extraordinary trial, there is a clear shining coming to your soul when all this rain is over! Look to Christ and you shall find where that clear shining is. The quiet contemplation you shall have of Him when this time of rebuke is over shall then be to you as the earth when the tempest has sobbed itself to sleep, when the clouds have torn themselves to rags and the sun peers out, shooting forth virtue with its lustrous rays.

And while sorrows, like the floating clouds, last not forever, they do work together with the bliss, like the clear sunshine follows afterwards to produce good. It is not in the sorrow alone, perhaps, to bring forth good, any more than the rain might, by itself, bring forth the spring blade. But when the sorrow and the joy, when the affliction and the consolation come together, then the joy of the heart is indeed benign. None bring forth much fruit for God but those who have been deeply plowed with affliction and deluged with grief—but even they do not bring forth much fruit till they have had the joy of Christ's Presence after the affliction is over! Clear sinning after rain produces an atmosphere good for the herbs, and the joy of the soul in the Presence of the Lord, after a time of sorrow, makes it able to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Thus, *after times of great troubles*, Christ becomes to His people more specially and delightfully sweet than He has ever been before. I notice this in many instances. It is manifest in conversion. What happy, happy days were our first, young days in the faith! I cannot forget mine—I never shall. When talking with those who come to tell me what God has done for their souls, I notice the freshness upon their memory of every separate event on the day of their new birth. They can tell how Christ appeared to them and how they looked to Him and were lightened. “I shall never forget that, Sir, till I die,” says one. “I have a very bad memory and I forget almost everything that is good—but that I shall never forget, for it was such a joyous season.” I know that many of you have had good days, but they have been like pieces of money that you received when children—once very bright—but they have been passed about and worn in circulation until they have lost the image and superscription which were once so bright to your eyes. Not so the day of your new birth! It has been like a coin, as fresh as when you laid it aside—and when you take it out again, it is as fresh as the mint delivered it and you can still read it and read the image of Christ which it bears! I think there is scarcely such a day on earth to be had in Christian experience as that first day when we came to Christ and knew Him as our Savior!

The same is true also, in its measure, *after great and heavy affliction*. You have been bereaved. A wife, a husband, a child has been removed from you, or you have had a great loss in business—you were crossed in

some expectation and you were cast into the lowest depth of trouble. Friends failed you, consolation fled from you but, after a time, you felt a sweet resignation. You could say, "My soul is even as a weaned child." Your troubles, somehow or other, grew sweet as honey, though before they had been bitter as gall! You saw the finger of a loving Lord in all those engraving lines of affliction which the chisel had made upon your brow and you saw the Great Refiner sitting at the mouth of the furnace, watching your gold that it might not be destroyed—and rejoicing over your dross because it melted away in the flame. Do you remember it? Why, I can look back to some of the happiest seasons of my life and see them stand in juxtaposition with the blackest times of trial! Oh, it has been, sometimes, a glorious thing to be cast down by rebuke and slander, and then go into one's chamber and lay Rabshakeh's letter before the Lord! And then to go down and feel more glad than a king of a hundred kingdoms because we have been counted worthy to suffer reproach for Christ! At such a season there is a calm within us more deep and profound than we ever felt before.

And, mark you, if it has been so with us individually, *it has been no less so with the Church*. Remember the clear shining after rain in the Apostles' times. "Then had the churches rest and, walking in the fear of God, were multiplied." Those little seasons of hush and calm between the great persecutions have always been prolific of converts. I hope, in the midst of successive controversies which darken the sky overhead, that when the rain is over and the noise and trouble it costs some tender spirits have ceased, and the powers of Darkness have been hustled to sleep once more, we may have some clear shining after rain and brotherly fellowship once again be renewed. The day comes when the great battle of Armageddon shall be fought, when the powers of Darkness shall be roused to frenzy's highest pitch, when Hell shall be loosed and the great dragon shall be permitted to come upon the earth, trailing its chain along in the supremacy of its hour—then, when dreadful war shall come upon the earth, when nations shall reel and stagger to and fro, the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God, and there shall be clear shining after the rain! And then, when the flames shall have consumed this orb, when Judgment shall have been passed, when Death and Hell shall have been cast into the Lake of Fire, when all the powers of evil shall have been utterly destroyed before the Majesty of His coming who shall overturn them that His Kingdom may be established in Heaven, everlasting hallelujahs, "For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns," shall bear witness that there is clear shining after the rain—for so must it be in the little as the great, in the experience of the individual as in that of the multitude—there must be a rain and there must be the clear shining after it—and the two together shall bring forth a matchless harvest to the praise and glory of His Grace who works all things according to the counsel of His own will!

Do you ask, now, why it is that God gives to His people sweet seasons just after the bitter?

One reason is *to take the taste of the bitter out of their mouths*. Even as to our little children, when they take their nauseous medicine, we give some sweetmeat, so does the Lord often, when He comes to His little ones, give them such sweet honey of His Grace that they might forget their sufferings in the sweet nectar which He guarantees them.

Another reason, no doubt, is *lest they should be utterly destroyed by the terror of His Judgment*. “He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” but, better than that, He takes it to His bosom—and when it lies there, little does it know that but for the rain and the tempest it had not lain in His bosom and been fondled there so tenderly! He put it there lest it should perish.

Then, again, He does it *as a sweet reward of faith*. He sees you in trouble, bravely struggling with the tempest, and says, “I will reward that man.” He sees you following Him in the garden, still clinging to Him amidst all the darkness and temptation and, therefore, He says, “I will give to that soul such joy, by-and-by, that it shall be well rewarded for its faithfulness to Me in the past.”

Is it not also *to prepare you for the future* that, in looking back, you may say, “The last time I had trouble, there was clear shining after the rain and so I feel it will be next time”? Ah, you timid one, there is a trial coming. It looms over your head. What? And did you behave valiantly for your Master in former times and will you be a coward now? Ah, my Brother, do you think there is a time of ruin threatening you and do you say, “His mercy is clean gone forever! He will be faithful to me no more”? Oh, why do you say that? Does my Lord deserve it? Has He been with you in six troubles? Then, why should He forsake you in the seventh? He that has helped you up to now will surely help you to the end! Why has He delivered you in the tempest, if He means to let you sink at the last? By the kindness of the past, the love experienced in former days, let your faith put out its great sheet anchor and outride the storm, for there shall again be “clear shining after rain!”

And surely, these changing seasons of ours, and that constant ordinance of His ought *to make us sick of self and fond of Him*. He puts gall on the world and He puts honey on His own lips so that we may hate the one and love the other! We are so fond of this world that we must be drawn away from it—and when we are drawn away from it and enticed to Him, our foolish hearts come to know His value—and we yield ourselves, by His Grace, up to Him!

I cannot tell to whom this sermon is addressed. I am sure it has a mission to fulfill. O Brothers and Sisters, it may be that these words may be worth a mine of gold to some of you, as clear shining after rain! If they reach your case, thank my Master for it! He may yet have a harvest from your soul. Be sure that you give Him the first fruits of the harvest. When there is clear shining after the rain, honor Him more, serve Him better, give more to His cause, pray more for His people, live more in His fear, commune more with Him and walk more closely to Him. Let it be true that in your case, as in that of this round world, the rain and the clear shining after it have brought forth their abundant fruit. When you and I

shall get to Heaven, we will talk on its green and flowery mountains of all the showers through which we passed, and of the clear shining! And, in the sacred high eternal noon, which shall be our portion forever, we shall, with transporting joys, recount the labors of the past and sing of the clear shining after the rain!

How sad the thought that there is no “clear shining after rain” for some of you! There is a rain of troubles in reserve for you—that you know. There will be more troubles yet in this life. There is heavy shower coming yet in death—and then it shall rain forever and there shall be a horrible tempest—that is your portion. If you believe not that Jesus is the Christ and trust not your souls to Him, all the woe you have ever known is as nothing! It is but the first spattering of the drops on the pavement. It is nothing compared with the storm which shall beat upon your unsheltered head forever and ever! But the Refuge is before you, man! The sky is dark, the tempest lowers, but the Refuge is before you. Run! In God’s name, run! The storm comes hastening on, as if God were gathering up all His black artillery that He might discharge His dreadful thunders upon you. Run! “But can I enter?” Yes, the door is open. Run! “But may I enter?” Yes, He invites you, “Come unto Me, yes, come unto Me—come this night—trust Me,” He says, “and I will save your soul.” “But I am unworthy.” Well, see the tempest! Run! Let your unworthiness put feathers to your feet and not stop you in your haste. Jesus calls you from His Throne in Heaven! He invites you—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let Him that hears say, Come.” Heaven and earth say, “Come.”

Sinner, will you avoid the tempest? Will you flee and find shelter in Christ? God help you to trust Christ, now, and unto Him shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 27.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* A sort of trembling seems to have been creeping over David, so he argues thus with his own heart, “Why should I be dismayed? Am I afraid of coming darkness? ‘The Lord is my light.’ Do dangers surround me? ‘The Lord is my salvation.’ Do I expect stern labor or severe suffering? ‘The Lord is the strength of my life.’ Are there many enemies watching for my halting? Yet, ‘of whom shall I be afraid’ since He is on my side?” Then he falls back upon his past experience.

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* “They were very fierce. Like cannibals, they meant to eat me right up. They would not have spared me. They ‘came upon me’ in such a fashion that I was taken at a disadvantage. I seemed to be altogether in their power, but ‘they stumbled and fell.’ I had not to lift a hand against them, but the

mysterious power of God entirely overthrew them! They stumbled and fell, then, so shall I be afraid of them now?"

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* "God has not changed. My enemies are not more powerful than they were and if they should become so, Omnipotence will still overmatch them. I will therefore be confident and calm, come what may."

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.* "That, wherever I am, I may be at home with God—that I may feel in every place that I am still in His house—never away from home—whether in the wilderness or in the city, still dwelling like a child at home with its parents."

4, 5. *To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.* "Will not a father take care of his own children? Does not even the feeble hen cover her chickens with her wings and will not God cover me with His feathers, and cause me to rest in safety under His wings? Yes, that He will. 'In the time of trouble He shall hide me' away from it, so that it shall not hurt me. I shall be hidden right away in His pavilion, in His royal tent which is pitched in the very center of His army. Around me shall lie all the forces of Divine Providence to protect me, since I am the honored guest of the Commander-in-Chief, Himself. In the pavilion of His Sovereignty shall He hide me."

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.* That is, in the Holy of Holies, into which no man might come. "There shall God hide me—in the tabernacle of Sacrifice—behind the Atonement of Christ." Thus David had the two blessed protections of Sovereignty and Sacrifice.

5. *He shall set me up upon a rock.* "His lofty power shall lift me above the turmoil and His immutable fidelity, like a rock that never moves, shall make me to stand fast."

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me.* "They may surround me and threaten me, but they cannot hurt me, for I am living with my God, abiding like a child in my Father's house."

6, 7. *Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice.* He has not done praising before He begins to pray! We are scarcely out of one trouble before we enter into another. This is what keeps Christian people alive because, escaping from one trial, they begin to praise and, falling into another, they begin to pray. And prayer and praise make up a Christian's breath! May we abound in both!

7, 8. *Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.* "So I answered You when You did speak. Now answer me, O Lord, when I speak to You." It sometimes happens that God speaks to us and we make no reply to Him. And for that reason He refuses to hear us when we speak to Him. You must have an opened ear to God if you expect Him to have an opened ear to you. Notice how David pleads—"Hear, O Lord

when I cry. When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger.* David has a jealous fear lest he should have provoked the Lord to hide Himself from him, so he prays as one who is dependent upon his Heavenly Father’s smile and cannot live without it. “Put not Your servant away in anger.”

9. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.* That is sweet pleading! Cannot you who are cast down, use it as David did? “You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” And then, as if to show that he does not pray this out of unbelief, but out of earnest and true faith he says—

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.* “The Lord will never forsake me. Though I pray, ‘Leave me not,’ I know that He will not. Father and mother retain love for their child when that child has lost every earthly friend, but, Lord, if Nature should change and mothers should turn to monsters, still, ‘when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.’”

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD.* This is a sweetly practical prayer. Our heart often says, “Lord, let me have my own way,” but when Divine Grace has done its work, it talks in another fashion, “‘Teach me Your way, O Lord.’ Only let me know what You would have me be and do, and feel, and I submit myself to You joyfully. But, Lord, I am so weak that, even if I am taught Your way, I fear I shall not go in it unless You shall do more than teach me.”

11. *And lead me.* “Put Your finger out, as mothers do to tender infants. ‘Lead me’”—

11. *In a plain path, because of my enemies.* “Do not let it be a difficult way in which I shall hardly know which is the right road, but let it be a very plain path. And, Lord, help me so to walk in my daily life that there may be no mistake about my being upright and honest before men—‘Lead me in a plain path.’” Oh, there are some, even among professing Christians, who have many tricks, shifts, schemes and dodges, just like worldlings or foxes! But the sheep of Christ must take care to follow the Shepherd’s plain footprints. There was no craft in Christ. In Him was no guile. And if we are Israelites, indeed, the same thing will be said of us! Oh, that we would each one cultivate a transparent character and not have to live so that our life is one perpetual apology for an attempt to hide something! Wear your heart upon your sleeve and let your soul show itself distinctly in your actions, not being afraid if all the world should see you.

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.* It is their delight to be cruel, to say unkind, unjust, untruthful things which lacerate the heart. And the more some people can tear good men’s reputations to pieces, the more pleased they are. I must say that it is hardly less than a miracle that any true servant of God should for any length of time escape even from the vilest slander, so base are the tongues of men.

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed.* That is the smelling bottle for a fainting soul—"I had fainted unless I had *believed.*" You must do the one or the other! You must either believe or else faint, but if your faith is strong you cannot faint. O you who are of feeble faith, it is little marvel that you faint! Would God that your faith were stronger! Notice what David says, "Unless I had believed"—

13. *To see.* Some say, "Seeing is believing," but it is not—it is the very opposite of believing. Some people must see in order to believe, but the true followers of our Lord believe to see. If you will believe it, you shall see it. But if you will not believe it till you have seen it, then you shall never believe at all. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see"—

13, 14. *The goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.* Why did David put that little sentence in and say, "Wait, I say"? It is a repetition, but not a vain one, for it is his own personal testimony, as much as if he had said, "I have waited on the Lord, and I have found that He helps me, so, wait, I say, on the Lord." Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we wait so much upon men, we wait so much upon ourselves! If we could get into that holy quietness in which God's voice could be heard within our souls—if the voice of man could be hushed and we were content that the Lord should speak to us—how much more blessed would our lives become! Now have you any burden at this moment? Have you any fears? Have you a knot which you cannot untie? Have you come into a labyrinth of which you cannot find the clue? "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

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NO. 2998

A SERMON
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*“And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises,
even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass
springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”
2 Samuel 23:4.*

No doubt, in the first place, David was speaking of the benefits of a wise and just ruler over man. In the East, where rulers are despotic, they can very soon lay on such heavy taxation and make such oppressive laws that the people are grievously impoverished. Sometimes the inhabitants almost cease to cultivate their lands, since they feel that if they do produce crops, they only produce them for a tyrant's table. By such cruel exactions, the trade of a country is often driven away and fruitful lands are turned into a desert. At the present moment there seems to be little or no reason why Palestine, for instance, should not once again become as fruitful as it used to be, were it not that the Turkish rule is so severe and so unjust that the people have no reason for industry and no motive for economy, since they are so ground down by those who are in power. It was largely so in David's day. Nations were so completely subject to the rule of their kings that according to the character of their ruler was the state of the people. It is a happy circumstance for us that, as a nation, we have ended all that, but it was the prevailing state of things in the days of David. So, I suppose, as a description of what he, himself, had been and as expressive of his hope of what Solomon would be, he says, “A good ruler is to a people like the rising of the sun.” Their troubles disappear—he conquers for them in foreign wars and he deals out justice to them at home. A good ruler removes, or at least reduces, the sorrows of the people over whom he rules. He is to them as “a morning without clouds.” They cannot find fault with his administration, for all his days he does them good and no harm—and he makes even their past sorrow to contribute to their present good. Under his rule they enjoy a season of clear shining after a long rain of sorrow and, by his wise laws, he makes the land so fruitful and the people so prosperous, that he is to them “as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” No doubt that was a part of what David meant.

But, please remember that this was David's swan song, for the chapter begins thus, “Now these are the last words of David.” And also remember that these last words of David are prefaced by this most important

declaration, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me.” So, under these circumstances, we cannot suppose that the meaning which I have given to the text can be the full interpretation of it, since there would be no necessity for Inspiration to teach that, and no need whatever for the God of Israel so to speak and the Rock of Israel thus to deliver Himself. We may feel quite sure that there must be some deeper, fuller, more mystical and spiritual meaning here.

And Christians of all times, and Jews also of former ages, have all been agreed that this passage relates to the Messiah. And we who know that the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, can, without the slightest difficulty, apply these words to Him and feel that they are most true concerning Him. Even if they did not primarily refer to the Messiah, we would be quite right in making them do so, because, if it is a general rule that a good ruler is all this to his people, then Jesus Christ, being the best of Rulers, must be all this to His people and He, ruling among men as He does—for this day we call Him Master and Lord—and ruling as He does, most wisely and in the fear of God, He must be, to those who belong to His blessed Kingdom, all that any other good ruler could possibly be and far more, so that for many reasons, we are quite right in ascribing to our Lord Jesus the language of our text—“He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

I want to do two things. First, to show you that *this passage describes our experience of the rule of Christ*. Secondly, to prove to you that *our experience should encourage others to receive Him as their Ruler*.

I. First, then, there are many of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, who can join with me in saying that the text IS A TRUTHFUL DESCRIPTION OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF THE RULE OF CHRIST since that dear hour which brought us to His feet, cut up all our self-righteousness by the root and blessedly taught us to trust and rest in Him.

Let us take the sentences as they stand and let the hearts of God’s children respond as I speak upon each one of them. Has it not been true, Beloved, that *Jesus has been to us as the light of the morning, when the sun rises*? Was He not so when first you saw Him? You were in the dark—an Egyptian darkness that might be felt was upon you. You had aforetime walked in the feeble and fickle light of the sparks of your own kindling, but those sparks were, at last, all stamped out and the light of all your candles was quenched in thickest gloom. Was it not like the rising of the sun when you—

**“Saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood”—**

and as He fixed His languid eyes on you, you realized that He had suffered in your place and borne the wrath of God on your behalf! The weary sentinel who has stood upon the watchtower all night, keeping

guard in the pitiless tempest, longs to see the first streak of daylight—and he will not readily forget the moment when, in the East, he first perceived the glow which betokened the rising of the sun! He may forget that, but *we* shall never forget the hour when, in our deepest sorrows, we caught the first glimpse of a Savior and of His wondrous plan of salvation! We saw that there was salvation for sinners and we perceived that it was suitable for us—and we perceived yet more gladly the fact that we might have it—that we might have it then and there by simply looking to Jesus Crucified! And we did look to Him and, oh, the brightness and the glory that we then saw! I am sure that I have no need to enlarge upon that—I have only to awaken your joyful recollections of that wondrous period and you will at once take down your harps from the willows and awaken all the strings to melodious praise of that rising sun which then arose with healing for you beneath its wide-spread wings!

Now, since that time, has not Jesus been as the sun in the morning, from the fact that He has never gone down? There have been clouds which have, for a time, obscured His light—in this misty world, there must be clouds. You have not always seen the golden light of Christ's love as you have seen it at certain times in your experience, yet since you first looked to Him by faith, you have never been in the same darkness that you were in before, for Jesus has never forsaken you, even though He has, for a while, hidden His face from you. Your vessel has rocked to and fro, but you have not been driven from your anchorage—your anchor has held fast even in the stormiest gale. You have been, sometimes, in great straits, yet Jesus has always been your rest and your stay. You have wandered in heart from Him again and again, but He has never refused to take you back to His bosom, as Noah took back the weary dove. O Soul, you know that Jesus Christ is not like the sun at its setting, when it goes from brightness into shade, but Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness which continues increasing in brilliance until it attains its perfect noontide glory! Have you not found it to be so until now? O child of God, if it were right for you to stand up and bear your testimony here, you would say, "Yes, He has not given me transient pleasure, but constant joy. He has given me peace like a river and righteousness like the waves of the sea. By trusting in Him I have had a continual holiday and a perpetual festival! Or if I have not, it has been because my faith has flagged, or my unstable heart has wandered from His love—but HE has always been 'as the light of the morning when the sun rises!'"

And, Brothers and Sisters in Christ have we not a good hope that the light which we have enjoyed will continue with us all our journey through? Thank God that Sun will not go down before the last stage of our life's pilgrimage shall be over! No, it will still rise higher and higher until the perfect day. And though the perfect day has not yet come, it will come. By faith our souls anticipate greater knowledge of Christ, greater enjoyment of Him, greater likeness to Him. We expect that as years tell upon us, although the flesh will decay, the spirit will grow stronger and

stronger! We believe that we shall still “bring forth fruit in old age” “to show that the Lord is upright.” We know and are fully persuaded that with us, at eventide, it will still be light and that when the sun of our natural life goes down, the Sun of our spiritual life will not decline, but rather we shall be absent from this land of clouds, eclipses and shades, and enter into the glory that excels! Milton speaks of an angel who lives in the sun, but what will it be to live in the light of Christ—to live in that Sun forever and ever? The distant glimpses of His Glory, the transient gleams of His face are Heaven below to us! “But what must it be to be there” where they behold Him with eyes supernaturally strengthened to bear the sight—a sight which we could not bear now? John says, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.” And that would be the case with us if we could see Him now. But, by-and-by, we shall be able to endure that beatific vision and then we shall be favored with it! And then shall we understand to the full, the meaning of these words, “He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises.”

This must suffice for the first sentence of our text. There is not one of us who has believed in Christ, but can say that this is true! We have not all experienced it in the same measure, but we can all say that it has been true to us up to the measure of our capacity to see this Sun and to bear the light of His beams upon us.

Now look at the next words—“even a morning without clouds.” And it is true that *to those in whose heart Christ has risen, He has been a morning without clouds*. When He first came to us, there was a great cloud—an inconceivably black cloud of sin which hung over us. Oh, what tempests there were hidden in its dense shadows! Eternal hurricanes and unending destruction were couched in the black bosom of that cloud! But we saw Jesus and the cloud instantly vanished! Where had it gone? Perhaps, at that time, we scarcely knew more than that it was gone by reason of our having looked to Him. But, oh, you know the story—how a blessed wind came and caught that cloud and bore it away up where there stood a lofty hill that towered above the clouds—a mountain whose summit reached to Heaven itself! Can you look up and see it? Can you bear the dazzling glory of its brightness, for it was a mountain all of sapphire, like the terrible crystal for its brightness and its glory? But the cloud came sweeping over the head of this sapphire mountain and, lo, it burst! Dreadful were the volleys of its thunder! Terrific were the flashes of its flame! It shivered the peaks of that wondrous mountain and the storm burst there in terrible fury!

That Mountain was the Lord Jesus Christ and for all of us who trust Him, the thundercloud spent itself there forever, leaving only mercy drops to fall on us in the valley below! Christ’s coming was to us henceforth as a morning without clouds! There is now no accusation to be brought against God’s people anywhere. If all the Believers who have ever lived, or who ever shall live, could be gathered together, we might maintain that there is not, in the whole universe, a single sin that can be laid to the charge of any soul that believes in Jesus! What says the

Scripture? “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none.” The work of the Messiah was thus revealed to Daniel, “To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins”—dwell on that—“*to make an end of sins*, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” Do you not see, then, that as compared to the black cloud of sin, Jesus Christ, when He came to us, was as “a morning without clouds,” since He took all that sin away?

And since that time, He has been the same to us, for no clouds have come. No clouds of fear, for instance, except some vain and foolish fears which our poor flesh has tolerated, but there has been no ground for fear. On the brightest day, in our changeful English climate, the fairest morning cannot always prophesy a clear day and, oftentimes, in other lands, you may long look up to a cloudless sky but, by-and-by, there may be a little cloud, like a man’s hand, and it will gather and grow until the storm bursts and puts an end to the brightness of the morning. We have no fear of that happening to us, notwithstanding all our shortcomings, mistakes, errors, failures and sins! Can any of us count them? None of us can! But they are not being treasured up against us—they are not gathering into a tempest to burst over our devoted heads. We are not laying by in store a dreadful measure of Divine Wrath, to be dealt out to us, by-and-by. That is to be the portion of those who are out of Christ—but those who are in Christ certainly have no need to fear any future storm of Divine Anger. As their sin is gone today, it is gone forever, for Christ has forever perfected those whom He has redeemed! Is it not a very delightful thing to live in this sense, on a morning without clouds—to look all around you and to feel that there is nothing to dread now that Christ is yours, and that, above, beneath, around, there is no cause for fear? Why, sometimes this glorious Truth of God makes our heart beat so quickly with joy that we wonder whether it will not leap out of our physical frame—to think that all is well, all well without, all well within, all well above, all well below, all well behind, all well before, all well for time, all well for eternity! “A morning without clouds”—where will you find this, in a spiritual sense, but beneath the blessed rule of Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords?

So, Brothers and Sisters, our morning is without clouds because we have no fear of any future trouble when we live under the rule of Christ. “Ah,” says one, “but I sometimes have.” But, my dear Friend, if you are really a Christian, you have no reason to have any fear of future trouble! “But I shall grow old,” says one, “perhaps I shall not be able to earn my daily bread. I am very feeble even now and, by-and-by, I may be completely bedridden, or I may have to undergo a painful surgery. I am already sadly depressed in spirit—so what shall I be when I get into even worse troubles than I have now?” Ah, my dear Friend, the Lord has provided for you, not merely for tomorrow, but for all your days! You may say with David, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” Some people may starve, but God’s saints shall not. Everyone who “walks righteously, and speaks uprightly,” may claim the ancient promise,

“Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” You may make clouds if you like. You may take down the telescope and breathe on it with the hot breath of your anxiety and then, when you look through it, you may say, “I can see clouds!” There are no clouds there—it is only your breath on the glass that makes you fancy that you see them! God will make all things work together for good to you. If He shall send you troubles, it will only be when it is better for you to be troubled than to be at peace. And He will always make a way of escape for you out of them and give you all necessary support while you are in them. Your shoes shall be iron and brass and as your days, so shall your strength be. Be of good cheer, Mrs. Despondency and Miss Much-Afraid! Fetch out your harps and let us have a joyful tune to the praise of our ever-gracious God! There are no clouds where Jesus dwells! And where He rules, it is as “a morning without clouds.”

There is not even the cloud of death to be feared. What a fuss many of us make about dying! Children of God, what a turmoil some of you sometimes make in your own souls about dying! I was speaking to a dear Brother whom you all know and he said to me, “I have once or twice lately been brought face to face with death. In extreme pain I thought that I should not be able to hold out many more minutes and that I must die. And oh, my dear Pastor,” he said to me, “it seemed the sweetest thing in all the world to expect to see my Savior face to face in a few minutes! I have, sometimes,” he added, “dreaded death, but when I seemed to be in the very article of death and thought that I must soon expire, I have wondered how I could ever have entertained such thoughts.” What is there for a Christian to fear in death? It is not dying—it is *living*—about which we ought to be anxious, if anxious at all! But you say, “It is the thought of the pains of death that trouble me.” But pains belong to *life*, so do not lay them upon poor death’s back! Death is the physician that *eases* pain! He does but lay his skeleton hand upon the patient and, straightway, the fever has departed and the sufferer is where the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick.”—

**“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, ‘They’re gone!’
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne!”**

Blessed be God, where Jesus rules, even the thought of death is not a cloud! If you are not under the rule of Jesus Christ, you will have many clouds, but if you are under His rule, if you have faith in Him, and live upon Him, and are a subject of His Kingdom, you will find that He is to you as “a morning without clouds.”

The other sentence of the text teaches us that *Jesus Christ sanctifies to His people their varied experiences*: “As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

Dear Friends, even under the rule of Christ we know that some trouble will come to us—there will be “rain.” There will be the rain of sorrow for sin. That is a blessed rain. I would like to be wet through with that. Sometimes there will be the rain of depression of spirit, but God

forbid that we should have too much of that! There will be the rain of affliction and trial—but we are taught to rejoice in affliction and to count it all joy when we fall into divers trials. Sometimes there comes the rain of spiritual humiliation. We are conscious of our own emptiness and we seem to be in such a place as the Valley of Humiliation, of which Bunyan has written so sweetly in his “Pilgrim’s Progress.”

Yes, we do get times of rain, but there also come to us times of “clear shining.” You know what that means to you after a time of trouble. It is very sweet, after you have been ill, to feel that you are getting better. I do not know any enjoyment in life that, to my mind, is equal to that of getting better after a severe illness—that is truly the “clear shining after rain.” And when you have been depressed and have gotten back your joy, that is more clear shining. It is all the clearer because of the rain! And the clear shining does you more good because there has been rain, for clear shining without rain might bring on dryness and barrenness. But when the soil has been well soaked and the clear shining of the sun follows, then the tender grass appears—and what tender emotions of love, joy, peace, rest and gratitude, have often come into the soul when, after we have had a heavy rain, which has deluged us, there has come the clear shining—the full assurance, the applied promise, the conscious love, the certain Presence, the blessed manifestation, the sweet communion! Many of you know, from happy experience, what I mean. I am only giving you a brief summary, for I cannot fully describe that clear shining though I have felt it full often.

Then it is that Jesus becomes to us like “the tender grass springing out of the earth.” In the East, when there has been no rain for a long while, everything looks dry and brown, but travelers tell us that in a few hours, after a heavy shower and a little sunshine, patches of green grass will be seen where everything was brown—and the daffodil, lily and all sorts of beautiful plants will spring up almost as if by magic! Is not that the case with us spiritually? When Jesus Christ appears to us, our soul, which had been saturated with sorrow, becomes joyous through the clear shining—and then brings forth the tender grass of gladness, gratitude, thankfulness and holy service for the Lord Jesus Christ! But if there is anything of that kind brought forth in us, let us remember that it is Christ, Himself, who is the sum and substance of it all, for it is He who is as the tender grass. “Without Me, you can do nothing,” said Christ to His disciples—and the fruit of the Christian is practically Christ, for if the Christian brings forth the fruit of holiness, it is the glory of Christ reflected in him! If he is bright with hope, it is Christ within him who is the hope of Glory. If there are any graces in us, they are the virtues which Christ has given to us! Our green grass is Christ, Himself, appearing in us! Our verdure, our beauty, our fruit, our everything is Christ manifest in us!

I like this metaphor of the “tender grass springing out of the earth.” Jesus Christ is to us what the green grass is to the field. In the story of the Creation, it is suggestive to read that the same day that God

separated the water from the land and called this, “Earth,” and that, “Seas,” He saw that something was needed to make it perfect. Imagine this earth just lifted up out of the waters—there are the mountains, the little hills, the plains and the valleys, but they are all like masses of mud, so God says, “Let the earth bring forth grass”—“tender grass” is in the margin, the very expression we have in our text. It looks as though God Himself could not bear to see the world naked, so He wrapped it up in those beautiful green garments which are like the holiday dress of this poor brown earth! And I believe that whenever God makes a Christian, the moment he is born anew, God looks at him and sees that he is just like the earth was before it was clothed with grass, so God gives him Grace to enable him to bring forth fruit. One of the first instincts of a true convert is to ask, “What can I do for Jesus Christ?” Though it is not much that he can do, it is like the grass—it covers him. Very soon the fruits begin to appear, bearing seed after their kind—it is Christ being displayed in the convert’s life, work and fruit! I remember when Jesus Christ was to me the first fruit of righteousness that I ever brought forth and, to this day, all the fruit I ever have. And I am sure it is the same with you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and you are glad to confess that it is so—all your fruit comes from Christ alone! He is to us as “the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

Thus I have spoken about our experience of the rule of Christ tallying with the Word of God as we have it in our text.

II. I will spend only a few minutes in speaking upon the second part of our subject, lest I weary you. It is this—OUR EXPERIENCE SHOULD ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR RULER.

If we had found Him a bad Master, we would tell you. As we have found Him inexpressibly good to us, we come to you and gladly bear our witness on His behalf. I am addressing a good many who have heard the Gospel for a long time and yet are not saved. When are you going to lay these things to heart? When shall the time of decision be? Listen to me with great earnestness for these last few minutes. I want you to receive Jesus Christ as your Ruler, but, before you do so, you must receive Him as your Savior! You cannot truly say, “I will serve Christ,” until you have first said, “I will trust Him.” The Gospel message is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” May the Spirit of God enable you, at this very moment, sitting where you are, or standing in the crowd, [or reading this] to trust the Son of God who lived and died that sinners might not perish. Trust Him and you are saved!

But, at the same time that you trust Him, please remember that Jesus Christ has come to be a Prince as well as a Savior. So if He is to save you, you must give yourself up to Him to be ruled by Him. Obedience to Christ must always accompany faith in Him. Jesus says to you, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” But He adds, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Are there not some young men here who need a Leader—who desire to have a Pilot who

will conduct them safely through the voyage of life and land them at the Port of Peace? Then, accept the Lord Jesus Christ, once crucified, but now risen and gone into the Glory. Take Him as Savior to cleanse you and as Prince to govern you—and all shall be well with you forever!

Have you come to Him? That is the important point. How you come is quite a secondary matter. There is much discussion about how we are to come to Christ, but the great discussion should be about Him to whom we are to come—not so much about your coming, as about the Christ to whom you come—not so much about your faith, as about the Object of your faith—the Lord Jesus Christ. If you build upon the Rock of Ages, you build securely. And if you rest in Jesus, you rest safely. If you come to Him, you came to the right place, or, rather, to the right Person. O poor Souls, there are some of you who if you had to come to Jesus Christ in very beautiful order, marching like the Life Guards on parade, would never come! But you may come creeping like little children who fall at every second step that they take. So long as you do but come, you may come in the most irregular fashion, with some faith and a great deal of unbelief—with many a doubt and many a struggle—many a pang and many a cry—many a groan and many a mistrust! Yet, as long as you do but believe in Jesus, lean upon Him and trust in Him, He will not cast you out! I sometimes find that all I can do is just to swoon away into Christ's arms, but as long as I get there, He never casts me out. It is a very blessed thing, I find, to come to Christ arguing with myself as to why I come and understanding much concerning His blessed Person and Offices, His finished work, His Everlasting Covenant and the Election of Grace. That is a very happy way of coming to Christ, but there are hundreds of people who are such babes in spiritual things, that they do not know these great Truths of God. They are so weak that they cannot grasp them and so confused in their minds that they cannot understand them. Well, then, they must come as they can! For he who comes, enabled by the Grace of God to come straightway to Jesus—for that is the vital point—he that comes to Jesus, He will in no wise cast out!

Christ says nothing about coming to a priest for pardon. We read in the Scriptures of one who had sinned very grossly against Jesus. He went to the priests and confessed his sin and then he went out and hanged himself. And I do not wonder that he did so, for there is no comfort to be had from a priest! But if Judas had gone to Christ—if he had been like Peter and had gone to the Savior and confessed his sin, he might have been forgiven and might have rejoiced in being pardoned. It will not do to go to man for forgiveness—you must go to Christ! And it will not do to look to yourself. Christ does not say, "Him that amends himself, I will in no wise cast out." No, but, "Him that comes to Me." [This subject is more fully considered in the very remarkable Sermon, #3000, Volume 52—NO. 3,000—OR, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Is not this a very simple matter? I have read a great many definitions of faith and a great many books explaining what faith is. And I have

always felt, when I have finished reading them, like the good woman who read Thomas Scott's explanation of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." After that worthy minister had sent his book to an old lady, he went to see her and he said to her, "Have you been reading the book I sent you?" "Oh, yes, Sir," she said. "Could you understand it?" asked Scott. "Well, Sir," she said, "I can understand what Mr. Bunyan wrote and I think that, one day, by the Grace of God, I may be able to understand your explanation of it." It is just like that with explanations of faith. I can understand the Gospel and I have no doubt that, one day, I shall be able to understand the explanations that some writers give concerning what faith means. Very often, a cloud of words is only like a cloud of dust and explanations of faith often minister confusion rather than edification. There is Jesus Christ—will you trust Him? If you do, He will not cast you out. May He help you to trust in Him now!

Do you still hang back? Then let me plead with you. You surely do not hold back from Christ because you think His service will be hard. Many of us have tried it and we have proved that His yoke *is* easy and His burden *is* light. Oh, if you could but look the Prince Immanuel in the face—if those blind eyes of yours could be opened so that you could see Him—you would fall in love with Him! The poet was right when he wrote—

***"His worth if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too."***

A spiritual sight of the Prince Immanuel would so enamor you of Him that you would count it your honor and glory even to be allowed to unloose His shoelaces! I would, young people, that you would so value the Christian experience of others that you would trust Christ for yourselves! He has been a good Master to me. I have served Him, now, for 25 years and, blessed be His name, He has never once done me or mine an ill turn! His work is good, His wages are good and He, Himself, is best of all! Oh, that you all would trust, and love, and serve Him!

Do you still hang back? Then what is your reason for doing so? Is it that you need more light? Listen! Christ is "as the light of the morning, when the sun rises," and you say that you are needing more light? Wanting more light, yet not coming to the Sun? You are awake in the morning with your shutters closed, your blinds down and you are fumbling about to find a match—and you are going to strike it and light a farthing candle—what for? Well, after you have lit it, you are going to open the shutters and see whether the sun is up! Very sensible behavior on your part, is it not? Yet this is what the sinner often does! He wants to get light enough to see whether Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, is shining! Oh, put away your matches and your candles! Do not look for any spiritual light but that which comes from Christ, for all the light that you ever get, unless it comes from Christ, is gross darkness! Go in your darkness to Jesus Christ, for He has light enough in Himself without your carrying any light to Him! We have an old proverb about carrying coals to Newcastle, but there is no folly in that compared with the folly

and sin of carrying light to the Sun of Righteousness! Go in your darkness to Jesus Christ and He will be light to you!

“Oh, but!” you say, “there are the clouds!” Yes, I know there are—your sins, your doubts, your fears, your hard hearts—and you are going to get all these put away and *then* you are coming to Christ, are you? You are something like a man who might be foolish enough to say, “My heart is affected, my limbs are full of pain and my eyes are bad—but when I get my heart better, and my limbs better, and my eyes better, I am going to a physician.” And why are you going to see a physician *then*? To show him what a fine fellow you are, I suppose! Why, Man, the time to go to a physician is when you are sick! And the time to go to Christ is when you are sinful, when you are surrounded by clouds, for He is as “a morning without clouds.” You can never get rid of the clouds, but HE can! So you must go to Him with all the clouds, all the sins and all the doubts about you—with a thousand ills wrapped round you, if so it must be—as full of devils as that poor man was out of whom Christ cast a whole legion! If you have all Hell within you, if you will but go to Christ just as you are, He will deliver you, here and now, with a single word! If you believe in Him, you need no preparation for going to Him!

“But,” says one, “I really want to be doing something before I come to Christ.” Possibly you have noticed what a fuss is being made in various newspapers concerning that hymn which contains the words—

**“*Doing’ is a deadly thing,
Doing’ ends in death.*”**

Certain gentlemen are very fond of talking about the immorality of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and trying to show how it is destructive of good works. I think that those who talk thus should try to practice a few good works on their own account. And one of the good works I would suggest to them is that of being honest enough to quote the whole of a verse, instead of half. Suppose I were to go about, and say, “Oh, the Bible is a dreadful book. It says, ‘There is no God’”? Somebody would very probably say to me, “How dare you make such a statement as that? The Bible says, ‘The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.’ You have quoted only part of the verse.” That is just what these objectors have done. The whole verse says—

**“*Till to Jesus’ work you cling
By a simple faith,
Doing’ is a deadly thing,
Doing’ ends in death.*”**

That is true. But if you cut off the first two lines, you have not quoted fairly and you have made the poet say what he did *not* say—and then you go on to say that teaching people to sing like that is teaching them to sing against good works. I am sick of this canting, hypocritical talk on the part of worldlings! They say that there is cant in the Church and among Christians. Well, perhaps there is a little, but not half as much as there is among those who quote half a verse and then go on to rail at Evangelical preachers as if that were all that they taught! Yet there is

much of that kind of evil in many unrenewed hearts—they want to get some good thing, first, and then they will come to Christ. They want to get the tender grass without coming to Christ, but they never will, for the fruits of holiness will never be produced in any man’s soul until he comes to Jesus, for Jesus is “as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.” Come to Jesus Christ *for* fruit, not *with* fruit! Come to Him for all good things and, poor Sinners, He will give them to you—

***“True belief, and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us nigh,
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

We preach good works with all our hearts, but they can only be worked by and through Jesus Christ! And we never dare tell sinners to do good works and *then* come to Christ. That would be putting the cart before the horse, planting the stem instead of planting the root and reversing the natural order of things, which, God forbid, that we should ever do! Come, you guilty! Come, you lost! Come, you ruined! My Lord Jesus loves such as you are. He has not come to heal the healthy, but the sick! He came, “not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” May He call you and bring you, for His own name’s sake! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—716, 711, 30.
AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS”—39.**

—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.**

DAVID'S DYING SONG

NO. 19

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 15, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND**

***“Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this s all my salvation and all my desire, although He makes it not to grow.”
2 Samuel 23:5***

THESE are the last words of David, so we read at the commencement of the chapter. Many have been the precious sentences which have fallen from his inspired lips. Seraphic has been the music which has dropped from his fingers when they flew along the strings of his harp. But now that sweet voice is to be hushed in death. And now the son of Jesse is to sleep with his fathers. Surely it were well to press around his bed to hear the dying monarch's last testimony. Yes, we can conceive that angels, themselves, would, for an instant, check their rapid flight that they might visit the chamber of the dying mighty one and listen to his last death song. It is always blessed to hear the words of departing saints. How many choice thoughts have we gained in the bedchamber of the righteous, Beloved? I remember one sweet idea which I once won from a deathbed. A dying man desired to have one of the Psalms read to him and the 17th being chosen, he stopped at the 6th verse, "Incline your ear unto me and hear my speech." He faintly whispered, "Ah, Lord, I cannot speak, my voice fails me, incline Your ear, put it against my mouth, that You may hear me." None but a weak and dying man, whose life was ebbing fast could have conceived such a thought! It is well to hear saints' words when they are near Heaven—when they stand upon the banks of Jordan. But here is a special case, for these are the last words of *David*. They are something more than human utterances. For we are told that the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him and His Word was on David's tongue. These were his closing accents. Ah, I think, lisping these words he rose from earth to join the chorus of the skies. He commenced the sentence upon earth and he finished it in Heaven. He began, "Although my house is not so with God," and as he winged his flight to Heaven, he still sang, "yet have You made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And now, before the Throne of God, he constantly hymns the same strain—"yet have You made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." I hope, my Friends, there are many of us who can join in this verse this morning and who hope to close our earthly pilgrimage with this upon our tongue.

We shall notice first, that the Psalmist had *sorrow in his house*—"Although my house is not so with God." Secondly, he had confidence in the Covenant—"yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant." And

thirdly, he had *satisfaction in his heart*, for he says—"this is all my salvation and all my desire."

I. The Psalmist says he had sorrow in his house—"Although my house is not so with God." What man is there of all our race, who, if he had to write his history, would not need to use a great many "althoughs"? If you read the biography of any man as recorded in the Sacred Word, you will always find a, "but," or an, "although," before you have finished. Naaman was a mighty man of valor and a great man with his master, *but* he was a leper. There is always a, "but," in every condition, a crook in every lot, some dark tint upon the marble pillar, some cloud in the summer sky, some discord in the music, some alloy in the gold. So David, though a man who had been raised from the sheepfold, a mighty warrior, a conqueror of giants, a king over a great nation—had his, "although," and the, "although" which he had, was one in his own *house*. Those are the worst troubles which we can have—in our own household. We are not an evil beast abroad, but we hate the lion most when it prowls upon our own estates, or crunches on the floor of our dwelling. The greatest trouble with the thorn is when it lies in our bed and we feel it in our pillow. Civil war is always the fiercest—those are foes, indeed, who are of our own household. I think, perhaps, David interceded when he said, "Although my house is not so with God," to speak partly of his *affairs*. If any other man had looked at David's affairs—the government of his country—he would have said, "David's government is the mirror of excellence." His house was so rightly ordered that few of his subjects could murmur at him. But David recollected that a greater and keener eye than that of *man* rested on him. And he says, speaking of his empire and his house—for you know the word, "house," in Scripture often means our business, our affairs, our transactions, ("Set your *house* in order, for you must die and not live")—he says, although before man my house may be well swept and garnished, yet it is not so with God as I can desire. Oh, Beloved, there are some of us who can walk before our fellow men conscious of innocence. We dare defy the gaze of our fellow mortals. We can say, "Lord! You know I am not wicked." We are blameless before this perverse generation—we walk among them as lights in the world and God has helped us so that we are clean from the great transgression. We are not afraid of criticism of our character. We are not fearful of being inspected by the eyes of all men—for we feel that through God's Grace we have been kept from committing ourselves. He has kept us and the Evil One touches us not. But with all this conscious innocence—with all that dignity with which we stand before our fellows—when we go into God's sight, how changed we are! Ah, then, my Friends, we say not, "Lord! You know I am not wicked!" But rather we fall prostrate and cry, "Unclean, unclean, unclean." And as the leper cools his heated brow with the water running in the cool sequestered brook, so do we bathe our body in Siloa's stream and strive to wash ourselves clean in the water and blood from Christ's riven side. We feel that our house is "not so with God"—though in the Person of Jesus we are free from sin and white as angels are—yet

when we stand before God, in our own persons, we are obliged to confess that honest as we may be, upright as we have been just and holy before men, yet our house is "not so with God."

But I imagine that the principal meaning of these words of David refers to his family—*his children*. David had many trials in his children. It has often been the lot of good men to have great troubles from their sons and daughters. True, we know some households that are the very image of peace and happiness where the father and mother bend the knees, together in family prayer. And they look upon a numerous offspring or not, as it may be, and most of them devoting their hearts to God. I know a household which stands like a green oasis in the desert of this world. There are sons who preach God's Gospel and daughters who are growing up to fear the Lord and to love Him! Such a household is, indeed, a pleasant resting place for a weary soul in its pilgrimage through this wilderness of life. Oh, happy is that family whom God has blessed! But there are other houses where you will find the children are the trials of the parents. "Although my house is not so with God," may many an anxious father say. And you pious mothers might lift your streaming eyes to Heaven and say, "Although my house is not so with God." That first-born son of yours, who was your pride, has now turned out to be your disgrace. Oh, how have the arrows of his ingratitude pierced into your soul! And how do you keenly feel at this present moment that sooner would you have buried him in his infancy—sooner might he never have seen the light and perished in birth, than that he should live to have acted as he has done—to be the misery of your existence and the sorrow of your life! O sons who are ungodly, unruly and profligate—surely you do not know the tears of pious mothers—or you would stop your sin. I think, young man, you would not willingly allow your mother to shed tears, however dearly you may love sin. Will you not, then, stop at her entreaties? Can you trample upon your mother? Oh, though you are riding a steeplechase to Hell, cannot her weeping supplications induce you to stop your mad career? Will you grieve her who gave you life and fondly cherished you at her breast? Surely you will long debate before you can resolve to bring her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! Or has sin brutalized you? Are you worse than stones? Have natural feelings become extinct? Is the Evil One entirely your master? Has he dried up all the tender sympathies of your heart? Stop, young prodigal and ponder!

But, Christians! You are not alone in this. If you have family troubles, there are others who have borne the same. Remember Ephraim! Though God had promised that Ephraim should abound as a tribe with tens of thousands, yet it is recorded in 1 Chronicles 7:20-22—"And the sons of Ephraim, Shuthelah, and Bered, his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days and his brethren came to comfort him. Abraham himself had his Ishmael and he cried to God on account

thereof. Think of Eli, a man who served God as a High Priest and though he could rule the people, he could not rule his sons! And great was his grief thereat. Ah, some of you, my Brothers and Sisters in the Gospel, may lift your hands to Heaven and you may utter this morning these words with a deep and solemn emphasis—you may write, “Although,” in capitals, for it is more than true with some of you—“Although my house is not so with God.” Before we leave this point—What must I say to any of those who are thus tried and distressing in estate and family? First, let me say to you my Brothers and Sisters, *it is necessary that you should have an, “although,”* in your lot, because if you have not, you know what you would do? You would build a very downy nest on earth and there you would lie down in sleep. So God puts a thorn in your nest in order that you may sing. It is said by the old writers that the nightingale never sang so sweetly as when she sat among thorns, since, they say, the thorns prick her breast and remind her of her song. So it may be with you. You, like the larks, would sleep in your nest did not some trouble pass by and frighten you. Then you stretch your wings and caroling the mating song, rise to greet the sun. Trials are sent to wean you from the world. Bitters are put into your drink that you may learn to live upon the dew of Heaven—the food of earth is mingled with gall that you may only seek for true bread in the manna which drops from the sky. Your soul, without trouble, would be as the sea if it were without tide or motion—it would become foul and obnoxious! As Coleridge describes the sea after a wondrous calm, so would the soul breed contagion and death.

But furthermore, remember this, O you who are tried in your children—that *prayer can remove your troubles*. There is not a pious father or mother here who is suffering in the family, but may have that trial yet taken away. Faith is as Omnipotent as God, Himself, for it moves the arm which leads the stars along. Have you prayed long for your children without a result? And have you said, “I will cease to pray, for the more I wrestle, the worse they seem to grow and the more am I tried”? Oh, say not so, you weary watcher! Though the promise tarries, it will come! Still sow the seed and when you sow it, drop a tear with each grain you put into the earth. Oh, steep your seeds in the tears of anxiety and they cannot rot under the clods, if they have been baptized in so vivifying a mixture. And what if you did all this without seeing your sons the heirs of the Light of God? They shall be converted even after your death! And though your bones shall be put in the grave and your son may stand and curse your memory for an hour, he shall not forget it in the cooler moments of his recollection, when he shall, by God's Grace, meditate alone. Then he shall think of your prayers, your tears, your groans. He shall remember your advice. It shall rise up and if he lives in sin, still your words shall sound as one long voice from the realm of spirits and either frighten him in the midst of his revelry, or charm him heavenward, like angel's whispers, saying, “Follow on to Glory, where your parent is who once did pray for you.” So the Christian may say, “Although my house is not so with God now, *it may be yet,*” therefore will I still wait, for there

are mighty instances of conversion. Think of John Newton. He even became a slaver, yet was brought back. Hope on! Never despair! Faint Heart never wins the souls of men, but Firm Faith wins all things—therefore watch unto prayer. “What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.” There is your trouble, a small cup filled from the same sea of tribulation as was the Psalmist's when he sang, “Although my house is not so with God.”

II. But secondly—David had *confidence in the Covenant*. Oh, how sweet it is to look from the dullness of earth to the brilliance of Heaven! How glorious it is to leap from the tempest-tossed ship of this world and stand upon the *terra firma* of the Covenant! So did David. Having done with his, “Although,” he then puts in a blessed, “yet.” Oh, it is a ,“yet,” with jewels set—“He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”

Now let us notice these words as they come. First, David rejoiced in the Covenant, because it is *Divine in its origin*. “Yet has HE made with me an Everlasting Covenant.” O that great word, HE! Who is that? It is not my own father or my own mother who has made a covenant for me—none of that nonsense! It is not a covenant man has made for me, or with me—but yet has “HE made with me an Everlasting Covenant.” It is Divine in its origin, not human! The Covenant on which the Christian rests is not the covenant of his infant sprinkling—he has altogether broken that scores of times—for he has not “renounced the pomps and vanities of this wicked world,” as he should have done. Nor has he renounced “all the lusts of the flesh.” Nor has he really become regenerate through those holy drops of water which a cassocked priest cast on his face. The Covenant on which he rests and stands secure is that Covenant which God has made with him. “Yet has HE made.” Stop, my Soul. God, the Everlasting Father, has positively made a Covenant with you! Yes, that God who in the thickest darkness dwells and reigns forever in His majesty alone. That God who spoke the world into existence by a Word, who holds it, like an Atlas, upon His shoulders. That God who poises the destiny of all Creation upon His finger. That God, stooping from His majesty, takes hold of *your* hand and makes a Covenant with *you*. Oh, is it not a deed, the stupendous condescension of which might ravish our hearts forever if we could really understand it? Oh, the depths! “HE has made with me a Covenant.” A king has not made a covenant with me—that were something for sure—an emperor has not entered into a compact with me, but the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Shaddai, the Lord of all flesh, the Jehovah of ages, the Everlasting Elohim! “He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant.” O blessed thought! It is of Divine origin.

But notice *its particular application*. “Yet has He made with ME an Everlasting Covenant.” Here lies the sweetness of it to me, as an individual—

***“Oh how sweet to view the flowing
Of Christ's soul-redeeming blood
With Divine assurance knowing
That He made my peace with God.”***

It is nothing for me that He made peace for the world. I want to know whether He made peace for *me*—it is little that He has made a Covenant, I want to know whether He has made a Covenant with *me*. David could put His hand upon His heart and says, “Yet has He made a Covenant with ME.” I fear I shall not be wrong in condemning the fashionable religion of the day—for it is a religion which belongs to the crowd. It is not a *personal* one which is enjoyed by the individual. You will hear persons say, “Well, I believe the Doctrine of Justification. I think that men are justified through faith.” Yes, but are *you* justified by faith? “I believe,” says another “that we are sanctified by the Spirit.” Yes, all very well, but are *you* sanctified by the Spirit?

Mark you—if ever you talk about personal piety very much you will always be run down as extravagant. If you really say from your heart, “I know I am forgiven. I am certain that I am a pardoned sinner”—and every Christian will at times be able to say it and would always, were it not for his unbelief—if you say, “I know in whom I have believed, I am confident that I have not a sin now recorded in the black roll. That I am free from sin as if I had never transgressed, through the pardoning blood of Jesus”—men will say it is extravagant. Well, it is a delightful extravagance! It is the extravagance of God's Word and I would to God more of us could indulge in that holy, blessed extravagance! We may well be extravagant when we have an infinite sum to spend. We may well be lavish when we know we never can exhaust the treasure. Oh, how sweet it is to say, “Yet has He made with ME an Everlasting Covenant.” It is nothing that you talk to me of my brother being saved. I am very glad that my friend should get to Glory and I shall rejoice to meet you all. But after all, the thing is, “Shall I be there?”—

**“Shall I among them stand
To see His smiling face?”**

Now, Christian, you can apply this personally. The Covenant is made with you. Man, open your eyes! There is *your* name in the Covenant. What is it? It is some plain English name, perhaps. It never had an M.P. nor an M.A. after it, nor a “Sir” before it. Never mind. *Your* name is in the Covenant. If you could take down your father's family Bible in Heaven you would find your name put in the register. O blessed thought! *My* name—positively mine! Not another's. So, then, these eyes shall see Him and not another's for me. Rejoice, Christian. It is a PERSONAL Covenant. “Yet has He made with *me* an Everlasting Covenant.”

Furthermore, this Covenant is not only Divine in its origin but it is *everlasting in its duration*. I have had some very pretty letters sent me from anonymous writers who have listened to me and being great cowards (whom I always abhor) they cannot sign their names. They may know what fate their letters receive—the deserved punishment I appoint to them. I cut them asunder and thrust them into the fire. I hope the authors will not have a similar fate. Some of them, however, quarrel with me because I preach the everlasting Gospel. I dare not preach another, for I would not have another if it were offered to me. An everlasting Gos-

pel is the only one which I think worthy of an everlasting God! I am sure it is the only one which can give comfort to a soul that is to live throughout eternity. Now, you know what an "Everlasting Covenant" signifies. It means a Covenant which had no beginning and which shall never, never end. Some do not believe in the everlasting nature of God's love to His people. They think that God begins to love His people when they begin to love Him. My Arminian friends, did you ever sing that verse in your meeting? Of course you have—

**"O yes, I do love Jesus,
Because He first loved me."**

That is a glorious Calvinistic hymn, though we know whose hymn book it is in. Well, then, if Jesus loved you before you loved Him, why cannot you believe that He always did love you? Besides, how stupid it is to talk so, when you know God does not change. There is no such thing as time with Him. There is no past with Him. If you say, "He loves me now," you have in fact said, "He loved me yesterday and He will love me forever." There is nothing but *now* with God. There is no such thing as past or future and to dispute about eternal election and so on, is of no avail. If God did choose His people at all—and we all admit that He chooses them now—I do not care about whether you say He did so ten thousand thousand years ago, because there is no such thing as the past with God. With Him it is all *now*. He sees things, past and future, as present in His eyes. Only tell me that He loves me *now*. That word, "now," in God's dictionary, means everlasting! Tell me that God has *now* pardoned my sins. It means that He always has, for His acts are eternal acts. Oh how sweet to know an Everlasting Covenant! I would not barter my Gospel for fifty thousand other Gospels. I love a certain salvation. And when I first heard it preached—that if I believed, God's Grace would keep me all my life long and would never let me fall into Hell, but that I should preserve my character unblemished and walk among my fellow creatures pure and holy—then I said, "That is the Gospel for me, an *everlasting* Gospel." As for that sandy Gospel which lets you fall away and then come back again—it is the most wicked falsehood on earth. If I believed it, I would preach the Gospel and be holy on Sunday and fall away on Monday and be a Christian again on Tuesday. And I should say, "I have fallen from Grace and have got up again." But now, as a true Calvinistic Christian, I desire to have in myself—and see in others—a life of constant consistency. Nor can I think it possible to fall away and then return after the many passages which assert the impossibility of such a thing. That is the greatest safeguard on earth that I have something within me that never can be quenched—that I put on the regimentals of a service which I never must leave—which I cannot leave without having proved that I never was enlisted at all. Oh, that keeps me near my God! But once make me doubt that—then you will see me the vilest character living under the sun! Take from me the everlastingness of the Gospel and you have taken all. Dear old Watts Wilkinson once said to Joseph Irons, when he said, "I love to hear you preach the Everlasting Covenant nature of God's love." "Ah,"

said the old saint, "What is there else in the Gospel if you do not preach it?" Brothers and Sisters, what is there else? If we do not preach an everlasting Gospel, the Gospel is not worth two pence! You may get anything uncertain anywhere else. It is in the Bible alone that we get everlasting things—

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

But notice the next word, for it is a sweet one and we must not let one portion go, "It is *ordered in all things*." "Order is Heaven's first Law," and God has not a disorderly Covenant. It is an orderly one. When He planned it, before the world began, it was in all things ordered well. He so arranged it that justice should be fully satisfied and yet mercy should be limed hand-in-hand with it. He so planned it that vengeance should have its utmost jot and tittle and yet mercy should save the sinner. Jesus Christ came to confirm it and by His Atonement, He ordered it in all things. He paid every drop of His blood. He did not leave one farthing of the ransom money for His dear people. But He ordered it in all things. And the Holy Spirit, when He sweetly applies it, always applies it in order. He orders it in all things. He makes us sometimes understand this order, but if we do not, be sure of this, that the Covenant is a well-ordered Covenant. I have heard of a man who bought a piece of land and when the covenant was being made, he thought he knew more about it than the lawyer. But you know it is said that when a man is his own lawyer he has a fool for his client. In this case the man had a fool for his client. And he drew up the covenant so badly that in a few years it was discovered to be good for nothing and he lost his property! But our Father's Covenant is drawn up according to the strictest rules of justice. And so is ordered in all things. If Hell itself should search it—if it were passed round among a conclave of demons they could not find a single fault with it. There are the technical terms of Heaven's court. There is the great seal at the bottom and there is the signature of Jesus—written in His own blood. So it is "ordered in all things."

That word, *things*, is not in the original and we may read it, *persons*, as well as things. It is ordered in all persons—all the persons whose names are in the Covenant. It is ordered for them and they shall come according to the promise—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me. And him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." O my Beloved Christian! Stop at this promise a moment, for it is a sweet well of precious water to slake your thirst and refresh your weariness. It is "ordered in all things." What do you need more than this? Do you need constraining Grace? It is "ordered in *all things*." Do you require more of the spirit of prayer? It is "ordered in *all things*." Do you desire more faith? It is "ordered in *all things*." Are you afraid lest you should not hold out to the end? It is "ordered in *all things*." There is converting Grace in it, pardoning Grace in it, justifying Grace, sanctifying Grace and persevering Grace. For it is "ordered in all things and sure. Nothing is left out, so that

whenever we come, we find all things there stored up in heavenly order. Galen, the celebrated physician, says of the human body that its bones are so well put together, all the parts being so beautifully ordered, that we could not change one portion of it without spoiling its harmony and beauty. And if we should attempt to draw a model man, we could not, with all our ingenuity, fashion a being more wondrous in workmanship than man as he is. It is so with regard to the Covenant. If we might alter it, we could not change it for the better—all its portions are beautifully agreed. I always feel, when I am preaching the Gospel Covenant, that I am secure. If I preach any other Gospel, I am vulnerable and I am open to attack. But standing upon the firm ground of God's Covenant I feel I am in a tower of strength. And so, as long as I hold all the Truths of God, I am not afraid that even the devils of Hell can storm my castle. So secure is the man who believes the everlasting Gospel no logic can stand against it. Only let our preachers give the everlasting Gospel to the people and they will drink it as the ox drinks water. You will find they love God's Truth. But so long as God's Gospel is smothered and the candle is put under a bushel, we cannot expect men's souls will be brought to love it. I pray God that the candle may burn the bushel up and that the light may be manifest.

But now, to wind up our description of this Covenant, it is *sure*. If I were a rich man there would be but one thing I would want to make my riches all I desire—and that would be to have them *sure*—for riches often make to themselves wings and fly away. Health is a great blessing and we need but to write one word on it to make it the greatest blessing, that is the adjective “sure.” We have relatives and we love them—ah, if we could but write “sure” on them, what a blessed thing it would be. We cannot call anything, “sure,” on earth. The only place where we can write that word is on the Everlasting Covenant, which is “ordered in all things and *sure*.” Now there is some poor Brother here this morning who has lost his Covenant, as he thinks. Ah, Brother, you once had peaceful hours and sweet enjoyment in the Presence of God. But now you are in gloom and doubt. You have lost your roll. Well, let me tell you, though you have lost your roll, the Covenant is not lost, for all that. You never had the real Covenant in your hands—you only had a copy of it. You thought you read your title clear but you never read the title-deeds, themselves. You only held a copy of the lease and you have lost it. The Covenant itself. Where is it? It is under the Throne of God. It is in the archives of Heaven, in the Ark of the Covenant. It is in Jesus' Breast. It is on His hands, on His heart—it is there! Oh, if God were to put my salvation in my hands, I should be lost in ten minutes. But my salvation is not there—it is in Christ's hands. You have read of the celebrated dream of John Newton, which I will tell you to the best of my recollection. He thought he was out at sea, on board a vessel, when some bright angel flew down and presented him with a ring, saying, “As long as you wear this ring you shall be happy and your soul shall be safe.” He put the ring on his finger and he felt happy to have it in his own possession. Then

there came a spirit from the vast deep and said to him, "That ring is nothing but folly." And by cajolery and flattery the spirit at last persuaded him to slip the ring from off his finger and he dropped it in the sea. Then there came fierce things from the deep. The mountains bel- lowed and hurled upward their volcanic lava—all the earth was on fire and his soul in the greatest trouble. By-and-by a spirit came and diving below, fetched up the ring and showing it to him, said, "Now you are safe, for I have saved the ring." Now might John Newton have said, "Let me put it on my finger again." "No, no, you cannot take care of it your- self," and up the angel flew, carrying the ring away with him, so that then he felt himself secure, since no cajolery of Hell could get it from him again, for it was up in Heaven.

My life is "hid with Christ in God." If I had my spiritual life in my own possession, I would be a suicide very soon, but it is not with me. And as I cannot save myself, *as a Christian* I cannot destroy myself, for my life is wrapped up in the Everlasting Covenant—it is with Christ in Heaven. Oh, glorious and precious Covenant!

III. Now to close our meditation. The Psalmist had a *satisfaction in his heart*. "This is," he said, "all my salvation and all my desire." I should not like the task of riding till I found a satisfied worldly man. I suspect there is not a horse that would not be worn off its legs before I found him. I think I should myself grow gray with age before I had discovered the happy individual except I went to one place—that is, the heart of a man who has a Covenant made with him, "ordered in all things and sure." Go to the palace. There is not satisfaction there. Go to the cottage—though the poet talks about sweet retirement and blest contentment—there is not satisfaction there. The only solid satisfaction satisfying the mouth with good things is to be found in the true Believer who is satisfied from himself, satisfied with the Covenant! Behold David—he says, "As for my salvation, I am secure; as for my desire, I am gratified—for this is all my salvation and all my desire." *He is satisfied with his salvation*. Bring up the moralist. He has been toiling and working in order to earn salvation. Are you confident that if you died you would enter into Heaven? "Well, I have been as good as other people and, I dare say, I shall be more reli- gious before I die." But he *cannot* answer our question. Bring up the reli- gious man—I mean the merely *outwardly* religious man. Are you sure that if you were to die you would go to Heaven? "Well, I regularly attend church or chapel. But I cannot say that I make any pretensions to be able to say, 'He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant.'" So I might introduce a score of men and there is not one of them who can say, "This is all my salvation." They always want a little supplement and most of you intend making that supplement a little while before you die. An old Jewish Rabbi says that every man ought to repent at least one day before his last day—and as we do not know when our last day shall be, we ought to repent today. How many wish they knew when they were going to die, for then, they fancy they would be sure to repent and be converted a little while before. Why, if you had it revealed to you that you would die

at twenty minutes past twelve next Sunday, you would go on in sin up till twelve o'clock and then you would say, "There are twenty minutes more—time enough yet." And so until the twenty minutes past had come, then your soul would sink into eternal flames! Such is procrastination. It is the thief of time, it steals away our life and did we know the hour of our dissolution, we should be no more prepared for it than we are now. You cannot say, can you, that you have all your salvation? But a Christian can. He can walk through the cholera and the pestilence and feel that should the arrow smite him, death would be to him the entrance of life. He can lie down and grieve but little at the approach of death, for he has all his salvation. His jewels are in his breast, gems which shall shine in Heaven. Then, the Psalmist says, he has *all his desire*. There is nothing that can fill the heart of man except the Trinity. God has made man's heart a triangle. Men have been for centuries trying to make the globe fill the triangle but they cannot do it. It is the Trinity, alone, that can fill a triangle. As old Quarles well says, there is no way of getting satisfaction but by gaining Christ, getting Heaven, winning Glory, getting the Covenant, for the word, "Covenant," comprises all the other things. "All my desire," says the Psalmist—

***"I need nothing on earth, above,
Happy in my Savior's love."***

I have not a desire, I have nothing to do but to live and be happy all my life in the company of Christ and then to ascend to Heaven, to be in His immediate Presence, where—

***"Millions of years these wondering eyes
Shall over my Savior's beauties rove,
And endless ages I'll adore
The wonders of His love."***

Just one word with my friends who do not agree with me in Doctrine. I am sure, my dear Friends, that I wish not to anathematize any of those whose creed is the reverse of mine. But they must allow me to differ from them and to speak freely and if they do not *allow* me to, they know very well that I shall! But I have this much to say to those dear Friends who cannot bear the thought of an Everlasting Covenant. Now, you cannot alter it can you? If you do not like it, there it is. "God has made with me an Everlasting Covenant." And you must confess, when you read the Bible, that there are some very knotty passages for you. You might, perhaps, remove them out of your Bible, but then you cannot erase them out of Divine Truths. You know it is true, that God is immutable, do you not? He never changes—you must know that—for the Bible says so. It declares that when He has begun a good work, He will carry it through. Do not get reading frothy commentators any longer. Take the Bible as it stands and if you do not see everlasting love there, there is some fault in your eyes and it is a case, rather, for the optometrist, than for me. If you cannot see everlasting, eternal security and blood-bought righteousness there, I am hopeless altogether of your conversion to the Truth, while you read it with your present prejudices! It has been my privilege to give more prominence in the religious world to those old Doctrines of the Gospel. I

have delighted in the musty old folios which many of my Brothers have kept bound in sheepskins and goatskins, on their library shelves. As for new books, I leave them to others. Oh, if we might but go back to those days when the best of men were our pastors—the days of the Puritans. Oh, for a Puritan Gospel again! Then we would not have the sleepy hearers, the empty chapels, the drowsy preachers—the velvet-mouthed men who cannot speak the Truth—but we would have “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good-will towards men.” Do go home and search. I have told you what I believe to be true. If it is not true, detect the error by reading your Bibles for yourselves and searching out the matter.

As for you, you ungodly, who up to now have had neither portion nor lot in this matter, remember that God's Word speaks to you as well as to the Christian and says, “Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” God's Word graciously promises that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out. It is a free Gospel, free as the air and he who has but life to breathe it may breathe it. Every poor soul here who is quickened and has a sense of his guilt, may come to Christ—

***“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream.”***

All the evidence you require is to feel your need of Christ. And remember, if you only once come, if you do but believe, you will be safe through all eternity. And amidst the wreck of matter, the crash of worlds, the conflagration of the universe and the destruction of all terrestrial things, your soul must still be eternally secure in the Covenant of God's free Grace!

God enable you, now, to become His adopted children by faith in Jesus Christ!

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

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

DAVID'S SUBLIME CONSOLATION

NO. 3356

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 29, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 23, 1867.**

***“Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He makes it not to grow.”
2 Samuel 23:5.***

NO GOLD but pure gold can stand the fire. And if a man's religion has been a pretentious sham, it is very likely to tumble to pieces under the rough hand of death. There have been a few hypocrites who have been able to brazen it out, even in the last solemn article, but these must always be the few. David, at any rate, was never the man who would play the hypocrite in the last extremity of death. You can see how true, how deep, how thorough his faith in God must have been, for his dying bed was by no means an enviable one. His dying pillow was stuffed with sharp thorns. His was a life which, although it had much of Divine Grace about it, yet had much of sinful nature, too. He was dying as we might not wish to die in some respects, but his faith triumphed as we may well desire that our faith may triumph, whatever the outward circumstances of our life or death may be! We shall go at once, and without further preface, to consider our text and notice in turn *the Psalmist-King's grave lament*. And then, blessed compensation, *his glorious comfort*. First, then, we shall ponder, and may the Holy Spirit make it greatly to profit everyone of us—

I. DAVID'S GRAVE LAMENT.

His house, he declares, was “not so” with God. And the numbers and the power of that house did not grow as he could have wished. Brothers and Sisters, there are some troubles that a man outgrows. There are some childish trials connected with our early Christian life which we, without effort, outlive and which in due course pass away. We shall not have to feel—thank God!—ever again the special perils of our youth and of our early manhood. When we have passed into riper years, we leave these things behind us. But there are some troubles which accumulate as we grow. For instance, there is the peculiar trouble alluded to in the text. There are, no doubt, multitudes of cares and trials connected with a family of little children, but every parent knows that the trials connected with little children are as nothing compared with the sorrows of those who have grown-up children that cause them heartache and heartbreak.

We could better afford to bury them one by one in their infancy, than that they should live to dishonor their father's name and to blaspheme their father's God! The mother might be well satisfied to watch over their sick couches night after night and to weary herself as though she labored in the very fire for their sakes. We could well put up with the little mistakes, sturbornesses, follies and even sins of their earliest days. But the sting is when, having left our roof, they leave our teaching! When, having gone from our training, they do not abide in it, but plunge into sin and prove to us most sadly that Divine Grace does not run in the blood, but that natural depravity most certainly does. Now, this particular form of trial accumulates as we grow older. Some of us here have not yet come to it. May God grant that we never may, but I know there are some here whose hairs are plentifully sprinkled with gray, who have this as their daily cross to carry and who look back on all the troubles of their youth and say that they were as nothing compared with this—the house being amiss with God, the children being disobedient—the sons and daughters training up their children, but not in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! This is a trial which comes when the battle of life, as we think, is almost over and when we might naturally expect to take a little repose in the eventide of life, before the dawning of the everlasting morning! This seems to be one of the last thorns that is thrust into our rest. With some it has been a thorn which, as in the case of David, has pierced their heart in its last beats and throbs. I may be addressing some such tonight. At any rate, I am addressing a great many who have need to pray against this trial. Oh, it is a dreadful thing—a terrible thing to look forward to, but what must it be to bear, none can tell but those whose hearts have been wrung by the iron hand of such an affliction!—

***“How sharper than a serpent's teeth it is
To have a thankless child.”***

David had an Absalom and an Amnon, and a Tamar—of whom the less said the better—and outside his dying chamber door there was an Adonijah trying to upset his father's last will and testament. And although Solomon was, in some respects, a great deal better, yet he was not, in those days, all that might be wished.

The fact is that, taken as a whole, they were a bad set. Was it any wonder that they should be such? David had himself very much to blame for it, for polygamy can never by any possibility work well. Jacob's trouble arose out of that and no doubt David's troubles began there, too. And this must have been the sting about it to David, that some of his children could quote their father's example for their sins! Not but what his life had had in it very many virtues, but children will cover their eyes and not observe those things when it does not suit their whim to see them. But if there is a fault in the parent, there is none more quick than the child to spy it out and to make the fall—the mistake of the parent which was pardoned, because wept over—to be the one outstanding mark of that parent's character and in that, alone, to imitate it.

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, at such a time, when we are stung with such a trouble so near to us—for the troubles of our own house ought always to affect us more than any other—there we get our first comforts around the family hearth and there we must expect to have our sweetest joys and our deepest pangs! When, I say, we have this affliction and have in it that drop of gall of knowing that we, ourselves, are somewhat responsible for the whole matter and that we cannot throw it upon Divine Sovereignty, but must take some measure of it to ourselves—oh, it will be glorious faith if still, with all those pangs and griefs in their utmost bitterness, we can say, “Yet He has made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire.” Believe me, it is one thing to read that text, but quite another thing to feel it! And it is one thing to suppose ourselves under these circumstances, rejoicing in the Lord, but quite another thing to come into these depths—these very depths—with God’s waves and billows going over us and yet, by joyous faith, to lift our head out of the waves and sing with bravest confidence in our God!

Now we shall be allowed, since David’s is but one case among many, to show that apart from the family—supposing that to be right—that there may still be other forms of poignant sorrow under which we may labor and in which our only relief will be to triumph in God’s Covenant faithfulness to our souls!

The trial to some of us will come possibly *from the Church*. The faithful minister makes the Church that he serves his family. The earnest deacon, the truly-called elder, considers the Church, too, to be his household. The excellent and devoted conductors of the Bible classes, and Sunday school classes will come in the faith and love of sanctified souls to look upon those under their charge as children committed to them as a sacred trust, to train and nurture in Christian life and conduct. And some of us can say, who have known it, that it is a grief that cuts very deep into the soul when the Church, or the class, or whatever our circle of service, is not so with God as we could desire! When we think of some who backslide. When we hear of some, as we have heard time and again, who fall into open sin and, worst of all, into cruel unkindness to the very person who was the means of their conversion, but of whom it is not now possible for them to say anything too bad or too unkind because they think they have received further illumination, and have learned something which God grant they may unlearn—whenever these things occur and they occur very frequently in a large Church and occur very painfully in a small one—they throw the minister, they throw the Sunday school teacher, they throw the earnest worker of any sort flat on his face, and they make him shed many tears and cry out to God in the bitterness of his soul, “You do not make my Church grow. You do not make my Church to be as I would have it to be—like Yourself. You do not give me

the sheaves which I long to reap, nor the souls to be saved which I long to win.”

It is a great and deep sorrow and it is a great blessing if, at such times, we can come back to this, “Yet He has made with me an everlasting Covenant.” You know it is that precious Doctrine which is meant to keep us quiet when we are succeeding, for the Lord Jesus said to His Apostles when they came back overjoyed and said, “Lord, even the devils are subject to us”—“Ah, nevertheless, rejoice not in this. Do not make this the mainstay of your joy, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.” Well, when it is not so with us as we would wish, but we have to experience the very opposite, I think that then I can hear our Lord saying, “Nevertheless, be not brokenhearted about this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven, that My Covenant with you is everlasting.”

Beloved, you may not have either of the two sorrows I have spoken of, but if you are a child of God, you will have fellowship with a third, namely, *the inward state of your own soul.*

In a certain very special sense, *that* is the definite household of everyone of us. These powers and passions, imaginings and emotions, thoughts and desires—these are, so to speak, the children of your house, and I am afraid that most of us will have to say, “Although my house is not so with God.” I read a book the other day written by a Brother whom I very highly esteem and, indeed, reverence for his holiness, excellence and usefulness. But when I found him speaking of himself as living in perfect allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ and perfect love to Him—and as having continued so for 20 years without sin—I must confess that I thought he must either use language in a different way from that in which I use it, or else that he and I must have very different kinds of hearts, for I do not find it as he said! I believe I have sincerely strived to serve my Master, and have served Him so as to have had given me many seals of my service, but I never did serve Him in such a way as to be satisfied with my service! I never could dare to feel content with a prayer I ever prayed, or a sermon I ever preached! I have always cultivated the idea that if I were to feel satisfied, I would be proud—and that if I did feel content, I would be doing wrong—and so I have rather strived against the feeling of being satisfied with anything within me—but have tried to continually feel that I still have enemies to drive out of the Canaan of my heart and corruptions still to subdue, glorifying God for anything that I could see that was gracious, but trying, at any rate, to mourn and lament over what was my own—and there is a good deal of that—and I find, if anything, more of it now than ever, not that there is more, but as we grow in Grace I think we perceive it more clearly! A room is not more dusty when it is shut up than it is when the sun shines in through the little crevice in the shutter, where the beam of sunlight comes through. There is no more dust in that particular part of the room where the sun shines in than there is anywhere else, and yet how very full of dust that slanting

sunbeam seems to be! The room is not more dusty there, but there is more light there than anywhere else. So it seems that the very coming in of light to the soul reveals more and more of the evil things, the spiritual ugliness that yet lurks there and which I fear will be there until the Lord takes us Home! It is very pitiable to see so many persons perfectly content to be so very imperfect, sitting down as though they—knowing they cannot here be absolutely perfect—have no desire to “grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” It does such persons good to hear a sermon on the Doctrine of Scriptural Perfection! If it does not make them angry with it, it does them good, for it makes them see that there is something better to be obtained in this world than they have ever yet dreamed and so stimulates their ambition! But for all that, I would still like to see a perfect man—and I would like to see Satan and he have a turn of conflict! And if Satan did not somehow or other get the better of him, I would be mistaken and surprised!

For this I know, that when we are most watchful and most guarded, temptations will still overtake us and surely these men must have some tragically unguarded moments. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it will not do! “Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” is as certainly the cry of the Christian as the rest of the sentence, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It is, none the less, a sorrow to a truly sanctified soul, not to be sanctified perfectly. It is a most bitter grief to conceive that there should be any sin dwelling in him. It is his cross and his burden and, therefore, at such times when the burden is heaviest, it is a gracious thing for faith to be able to say, “Although my heart is not so with God as I would have it and I do not live so near to Him as I could desire, nor serve Him as I wish, yet still, for all that, I am a sinner saved by Grace, and He has made with me, unworthy me, an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.”

The beauty of the comfort of the text is that it is set boldly, strikingly, upon so black a foil! In David's case a sorrow of the bitterest kind is associated with a joy of the sweetest description! What I am driving at is this—whether it is family trouble, Church trouble, or inward spiritual trouble arising from personal experience, it is the work, boast and glory of faith to be able to see light in the midst of the darkness, to find a way through the sea and a path through the desert—and to sing—“Though this is not what I would have it, nor that, nor the other thing, nor a thousand things, yet has He made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure”!

I shall not stay to say anything about the latter part of the verse, namely, about the house not growing. David did not see his family grow in the estimation of the people, grow in strength, grow in numbers. It is a great sorrow not to see our families growing up in piety and advancing in holiness—a great grief not to see our Churches making steady progress—and a heavy trouble, most of all, not to see our own hearts growing in

love and other Divine Graces, and so going onward towards ripe maturity of blessed character.

Having thus spoken of David's great lament, we now turn with joyful relief to speak of—

II. DAVID'S GLORIOUS COMFORT.

As I said before, we will only give you a few plain, practical thoughts, praying the Holy Spirit to make them of Divine Power. The glorious comfort which David found lay in the Covenant which God had made with him. With David it was a Covenant of royalty for himself and for his seed, but we believed he also had a further vision of the Covenant of Grace. At any rate, we of the Gospel dispensation must do so, for though we shall not have earthly thrones, yet under Christ's Covenant we are made kings and priests unto God!

Now, let us suppose ourselves to be sitting down alone, soliloquizing over all our griefs. There is a burden upon our mind and this thought crosses us—"Yet" I have a, "yet," to set over against my "although." I have a heavy, "although," to mar my prospects, but I have a delightful, inspiring, "yet," to shed its light upon them—"Yet has He made with me a Covenant."

Observe, first, that this Covenant made with us is a Covenant of pure Grace. It would scarcely console Adam to think of the Covenant under which he was—the Covenant of Works. It would be very sorry consolation to think of the Covenant of Works now, for we have all broken it and all that remains to us of its provisions is its curse! But we rejoice to know that that Covenant of Works is, as far as we are concerned, fulfilled completely by Jesus Christ—and there remains nothing but God's side of it to be fulfilled! Christ undertook our side of it and He declared, "It is finished," when He gave up the ghost. Man's side of the Covenant of Grace is fulfilled and, therefore, the Covenant stands now solely and only as a Covenant of pure and unconditional promise on the part of God towards His elect people! A delightful thought is this, for on these terms it is truly a Covenant of Grace. "I will and they shall—I will give them a new heart, and a right spirit, and they shall walk in My ways. I will purge, and wash, and cleanse them, and they shall be clean." It is a Covenant without, "ifs," or, "buts," or, "perhapses," in it because its elements are unalloyed Grace—Grace, Grace, Grace, and not a single jot or tittle of merit in it! Now, Believer in Christ, you are under such a Covenant, a Covenant which is all promise to you and no threats! Ought not this to cheer and comfort you? These dark afflictions—what are they? You can say, as one of old said, "Strike now, Lord, if You will, for I am forgiven! Now do what You will with me, for I am Your child."—

***"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside."***

Nor has life any, either, for the worst sting is gone, sin is removed and I am saved! Now, Lord, I leave everything in Your hands, making no conditions or stipulations, but will be pleased, or strive to be pleased, with all

Your will provides, since I know that the threats are all gone and there remains for me nothing but promises full of boundless mercy which then shall be my heritage!”

The next thought is, that *this Covenant is made with me*. Beloved, I cannot preach on this as I would, but I pray that the Holy Spirit may bring home to your souls both the power and sweetness of the thought, “Yet has he made *with me* an everlasting Covenant.” The Doctrines in themselves are delightful, but it is the personal interest in and realization of the Doctrines that give real delight!. The Covenant—oh, yes, that is the Well of Bethlehem—but it is “within the gate.” But a Covenant made with *me*. Ah, that is the water from the well rippling at my very lips! I drink it and am completely refreshed! It would be pleasant to hear of a Covenant made with ten thousand men, that they might be saved, and our common humanity might make us rejoice therein. A Covenant made with countless millions might well make us glad to overflowing, but, after all, it is not selfish, but only laudable as the law of self-preservation God has Himself implanted in us, for us most of all to rejoice in our own personal faith in Christ, our personal property in the Covenant of which He is the Surety! “Yet He has made with me.” You know, sometimes, when I am thinking of God’s mercy, trying to get a grip of my adoption and my acceptance in the Beloved, I find myself crying and at other times laughing. It seems such a wonder that an “heir of wrath” should be made an heir of Heaven—an enemy of God made to be His own Dear son to whom He has made absolute promises of Infinite Love and unutterable Grace! Surely this ought to make our hearts leap like the heart of a warrior when the battle has come to a close and the victory has been won! How joyous ought to be the Christian’s life! There ought to be a sacred exhilaration, a holy riot in our spiritual life at the thought that God has personally made with us—unworthy, sinful, but pardoned and accepted men and women—“a Covenant ordered in all things and sure.”

There is a very poor man in this place, just come from his labor. He has not even had time to go home to wash his face. He is very poor. If you could see his room, there is very little furniture in it and the wages he earns come to a very little. He has been poor for years and years. You, perhaps, would scarcely notice him. He is a mere drudge, a weight lifter, a carrier, one of the despised “masses” and yet God has made with him an everlasting Covenant! Why, what a contrast between the parties to this Covenant! Here is the Infinite and Eternal God with all the blazing splendor of His Deity—and He has made a Covenant with this poor despised child of poverty and toil! Well, now, if you come to think of it, there is no difference in spiritual need between the crossing-sweeper and the millionaire! They are only two frail mortals, with a little difference in their circumstances and surroundings, but there is no difference when they go to their last resting place, and they sleep in the lap of mother earth! And yet, with either or both, God is ready to make an everlasting Covenant—

with such insignificant ones, with you and me! Oh, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, here is the music of it—"with *me*." Now, may your faith lay her hand on the dear Savior's head afresh, look to Christ anew, see His blood flowing for you, wash again and feel that you are clean and then say, "Yet He has made *with me* an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

It may increase our joy to remember *the Person* who has made this Covenant. If the Covenant had been made with men, it might have been kept, or it might not have been—for the surest treaties have been broken—and when men have been bound with fetters, the proverb has not always been proved true, "Fast bind, fast find," but men have slipped through a thousand nooses and have been untrustworthy even when solemn oaths and obligations have been used to bind them down! But God is true, so true that we might take His Word at once, and yet since He knew our unbelief, He has been pleased to give us "two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us." He has done this, He who has not twice destroyed the earth with a flood, notwithstanding all her sins! He who settled the mountains and fixed the hills in their sockets has said that the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but that His love shall not depart from us, neither shall His Covenant be removed from us. He has said it whose power is equal to His Truth, whose love, with golden hands, encircles both His power and His faithfulness. He has said it who never knows the shadow of a change, the sun without a parallax and without a tropic. He has said it, the great I AM has made with us a Covenant of Grace!

Then comes the thrilling Truth of God—"an *everlasting Covenant*." We must not, above all things, leave that out! It is the duration of the mercy which is always the great theme of joy to the Christian. I do not know where my brethren get their comfort from, who believe in a *temporary* Covenant of Grace. I am not disposed to controvert with them because if they like it and can get any comfort out of it, I am very glad that somebody should. But it is a kind of land I should never think of plowing, nor should I ever wish to add to my farm! I shall never be tempted to covet that as Ahab covets Naboth's vineyard. That system of theology seems to me to play fast and loose with Divine things and make man stronger than God—and so I am content not to desire its possession. I suppose I am a greater sinner than they and have more need of Grace and I come back to my Master's power alone to keep me, rather than depend on my own strength to keep myself. And here are my comfort and joy, that if God has made a Covenant with me, He has not done it for today or tomorrow and next week, or even next year, but for all eternity! When the hair turns gray, the Covenant will still be young! And when the pulse beats low and the death sweat shall stand on our brow, the Covenant will be as full of life as in our early days when first we knew the Lord. It is "an everlasting Covenant," and everlasting in the respect of its being

made with me, not a Covenant which is everlasting, but which changes with persons and is first with one and then with another. "He has made *with me an everlasting Covenant.*"

Oh, Christian, rejoice! Do not be afraid of rejoicing in that Doctrine of the safety of the saints. Depend upon it, though some have used it to their own destruction and their end shall be terrible for having perverted the Truth of God to make it a cloak for sin, yet the children of God have always found that when they are most happy they can be most active! When they feel most safe they are most grateful and when they are most grateful they are most courageous and the most self-sacrificing! Do not be afraid of knowing that you are safe in Christ, for if your thoughts are troubled about your eternal security, you will not be able to give the integrity of your manhood and womanhood to the cause of God. But if you know that you are saved, if you are sure of it, if you know that your ship can never be driven on the rocks, if you can give your whole selves, body, soul and spirit unreservedly to God, out of no legal motives, but under the Divine constraints of gratitude, gratitude to eternal love—you are the man or woman who God the Spirit can make into a fine strong Christian! But if you are forever struggling and striving, now believing, now doubting and thinking that your safety depends on something you can do, and that the whole matter may possibly tumble down—you will get no joy out of your salvation and will forever be a self-seeker of a certain kind. But grasp the Truth of God that your salvation is finished once and for all and you can then say, no *sing*, "Now for the love I bear His name, my whole spirit, my whole time, talents, substance—all shall be laid upon the altar of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me."—

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

And now note, very briefly, indeed, that this everlasting Covenant *is ordered and sure*. This, too, should fill us with holy musing and sacred exultation. It is so ordered that Divine Justice is not infringed, while Divine Mercy is magnified! It is so ordered that the safety of the soul is secured, and yet the soul is delivered from its sin—so ordered that holiness excludes the sinful from Heaven and yet the sinful are admitted, having been washed in the precious blood of the Covenant. "Ordered in *all things*"—its great things and its little things! Every wheel and every cog of every wheel, was in the mind of the Divine Artificer and has been placed in its proper position to work out the Divine result! Ordered with regard to the past, the present and the future! Ordered with regard to Nature and to Providence—ordered with regard to my body and my soul—ordered as to the perfection of my Divine manhood before the Throne of God!

It is ordered in all things and is, therefore, *sure*. It would not have been sure had it not been well ordered, but being well ordered and fixed

according to the truest Law of God, there is no fear of any division of its parts or any dislocation of its members! It will never be a house divided against itself. You know that when a house has no order in it, nothing can be relied upon. Wills run contrary to one another and discord reigns. But there is nothing of the kind in the Covenant of Grace. There are no conflicting elements. All the elements are of one kind. Boasting is excluded. Human merit is cast out. It has Grace for its Alpha and Grace for its Omega. It has Grace for its foundation and the topstone shall be brought forth with shouts of, "Grace, Grace," unto it. Infinite Wisdom planned it and so the ideas of human fallibility and mistake have been excluded from it. "Ordered in all things and sure."

Let our souls then fall back upon this Truth with the exclamation of David, "This is all my salvation and all my desire." If, indeed, God has made such a Covenant with me, then I am saved. I rest upon Christ whom God has said He has set forth to be a Covenant for the people—a Leader and Commander to the people. My dear Friends, are you all trusting in Christ alone? Is He all your salvation? Is He all your desire? I think that is one of the ways by which to discover the true sons of Zion from those that are not so—by seeing whether Christ is all their salvation! There are some who save a little corner for something else besides Christ. Beloved, it must come to this—if you and I are ever saved—that Christ as He is revealed in the Covenant of Grace must be all our salvation! He must be made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! Christ is ALL! Oh, what blessed Truth that is! How it drives all priestcraft out of the world! How it makes absurd and profane all pretended soul-saying ceremonies! How it brings us to the Savior, simply and alone to Him, "This is all my salvation"—what Christ has done for me and what God promises to give me as the result of what Christ has done in fulfilling the Covenant of Grace on my behalf—this is all my salvation!

And now, Sinner, you who have never come to Christ, remember that this must be all your salvation if ever you are saved. And does not this cheer you? You thought you were to get some good feelings. You need not. You may come to Christ for them. "Oh," you say, "but I must repent." He is exalted on high to *give you repentance*. It is His work to give you repentance! Come to Him as you are, with nothing of your own, and rest wholly in Him. And you have then, in your soul, the true sign of God's electing love. If you rest wholly upon Jesus, do not trouble your head about either the glorious past or the glorious future, but rejoice now! To lay hold on Christ is to lay hold on everlasting love and to find a resting place that shall last you when the world has melted away like a moment's foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is gone forever. Rest in God patiently—with your whole soul relying upon the merit of Jesus—and the everlasting Covenant is yours!

And the text closes with saying—"and all my desire." "I do not want anything else to rest upon. But this one thing do I covet—no other source

of joy than this." So David seems to say. Ah, but some of you Christian people cannot say, "This is all my desire" Your desire is to make a great deal of money! Your desire is to dress so that people may think you a person of great taste and refinement! Or your desire is to be respectable, or your desire is to be something far away from the thoughts of God! You smile, but it is really not at all a thing at which to smile. It is a great pity that so many whom we would hope to be Christian people do not find their chief delights in God and do not let their desires end in Him. This is a sad, sad thing. If there were a wife here who found her greatest pleasure in somebody else's company rather than her husband's, it would be a very great disgrace to her. And it is a terrible dishonor to a Christian when, in order to get his pleasures, he has to get out of the circle of communion with Christ! I have heard of such Christians. "Oh," they say, "well, we try to be circumspect and so on, as a matter of duty, but may we not enjoy ourselves?"

Well, but where—where—where? You do not like to say where and I will not press the question, but there are some who enjoy themselves most when they are where Christ would not go—no, where Christ would not have *them* go and where they would not like Christ to come and find them there! Now, question yourselves whether you belong to Christ at all if that is the case, for our sweetest pleasures, if we are true Christians, we find when we are most conformed to Christ, doing His will most conscientiously in His sight, most denying ourselves and most completely giving up our own wills and wishes, after a carnal sort, that the will of Christ may reign in our mortal bodies to His Glory! "This is all my salvation and all my desire." Let others roam through the world as they may, but the soul of the Christian is satisfied at home. He can say, in the words of our hymn—

***"I need not go abroad for joy,
I have a peace at home!
My sighs are turned into songs,
My heart has ceased to roam.
Down from above the Blessed Dove
Has come into my breast,
To witness there eternal love,
And give my spirit rest."***

So may it be with you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 3:9.**

Verses 9, 10. *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, 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, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher: with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace have they not known.' There is no fear of God before their eyes. This is a description of man given by Prophets in the olden times. "Now," says Paul, "we know that what things soever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law." So that this is a description of the Jews, a description of the people who had the Light of God, the best people that were then upon the face of the earth—and if these are the good people—where are the Gentiles, the bad ones without the Light?

19, 22. *Now we know that what things soever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets—even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe—for there is no difference. There is no righteousness of works on the face of the earth. The Law, itself, describes men as being sinful from their throat to their feet. Almost every member of the body is mentioned and described as being foul with sin! But, says Paul, there is another righteousness on the face of the earth—and that is the righteousness of God's Grace, which comes through believing in Christ!*

23, 31. *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what Law? Of works? No, but by the Law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also—seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid! Yes, we establish the Law.*

—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.**

THE MAN WHOSE HAND STUCK TO HIS SWORD NO. 3193

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 1910.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: he arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck unto his sword: and the LORD worked a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.”
2 Samuel 23:9, 10.***

IN David's muster-roll we find the names of many mighties and they are honored by being found there. These men came to David when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb and he, himself, was regarded as a rebel and an outlaw. And they remained faithful to him throughout their lives. Happy are they who can follow a good cause in its worst estate, for theirs is true glory. Weary of the evil government of Saul, they struck out a path for themselves in which they could best serve their country and their God. And though this entailed great risks, they were amply rewarded by the honors which in due time they shared with their leader. When David came to the throne, how glad their hearts must have been! And when he went on conquering and to conquer, how they must have rejoiced, each one of them remembering with intense delight the privations which they had shared with their captain. Brothers, we do not ourselves aspire to be numbered with the warlike. The roll of battle does not contain our names and we do not wish that it should. But there is a roll which is now being made up—a roll of heroes who do and dare for Christ, who go outside the camp and take up His reproach and, with confidence in God, earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and venture all for Jesus Christ! And there will come a day when it will be infinitely more honorable to find one's name in the lowest place in this list of Christ's faithful disciples than to be numbered with princes and kings! Blessed is he who can this day cast in his lot with the Son of David and share His reproach, for the day shall come when the Master's Glory shall be reflected upon all His followers!

I. We will now turn our attention to one particular hero, Eleazar, the son of Dodo, and see what he did for his king and country. Our text records one of his feats. It is very instructive and the first lesson I gather from it is THE POWER OF INDIVIDUAL ENERGY.

The Philistines had set the battle in array. The men of Israel came out to fight them but, for some reason or other, “being armed and carrying bows, they turned back in the day of battle.” Ignominious is the record, “the men of Israel were gone away.” This man, Eleazar, however, made up for the failures of his countrymen, for “he arose, and smote the Philis-

tines.” He was a man of marked individuality of character, a man who knew himself and knew his God, and did not care to be lost in the common mass, so as to run away merely because they ran. He thought for himself and acted for himself—he did not make the conduct of others the measure of his service, but while Israel fled—“he arose, and smote the Philistines.”

The personal obligation of each individual before God is a lesson which all should learn. It is taught us in our Baptism, for there each Believer makes his own confession of faith and, by his own act and deed, avows himself to be dead with Christ. Pure Christianity knows nothing of proxies, or sureties in Baptism! After our profession of faith is made, the Believer is responsible for his own religious acts and cannot employ priests or ministers to perform his religion for him. He must himself, pray, search the Scriptures, commune with God and obey the Lord Jesus. True religion is a personal thing. Each man, with one talent or with ten, will, on the Great Day of Judgment, be called to account for his own responsibilities, and not for those of others. And, therefore, he should live as before God, feeling that he is a separate personality and must, in his own individuality, consecrate himself—spirit, soul and body—entirely to the Lord. Eleazar, the Son of Dodo, felt that he must play the man, whatever others might do, and, therefore, he bravely drew his sword against the uncircumcised Philistines! I do not find that he wasted time in upbraiding the others for running away, nor in shouting to them to return—he just turned his own face to the enemy and hewed and hacked away with all his might! His brave example was sufficient rebuke and would be far more effectual than ten thousand sarcastic orations!

Never let it be forgotten that *our responsibility, in a certain sense, begins and ends with ourselves*. Suppose you entertain the opinion that the Church of God is in a very sad state? You are only responsible for that as far as you, yourself, helped to create that condition. Do you regret that many persons with much wealth do not consecrate their substance? I do not wonder that you feel thus, but, after all, the most practical thing is to use your own substance in your Master’s cause! It is very easy to pick holes in other people’s work, but it is far more profitable to do better work yourself. Is there a fool in all the world that cannot criticize? Those who can, themselves, do good service are but as one in a thousand compared with those who can see faults in the labors of others. Therefore, if you are wise, my Brothers and Sisters, do not quibble as others, but arise and smite the Philistines!

Our responsibility is not diminished by the evil conduct of other men but, on the contrary, it is increased thereby. You say, “How so?” I answer—If every man fights his best, then Eleazar may be well content to fight as well as the rest. But if other men are running away, Eleazar is called upon, by that unhappy circumstance, to rise above himself and retrieve the fortunes of the day. It will never do to allow the enemy to triumph and, therefore, if we have fought well, before, we must now gird up our loins for extraordinary battle. Dear Christian Brother, if you are solemnly impressed that the condition of the Churches is not what it

should be, you must leave no stone unturned to set it right! Are your fellow Christians worldly? You should become more spiritual and heavenly-minded! Are they sleepy? Be you the more awake! Are they lax? Be you the more strict! Are they unkind? Be you the more full of love! Set your watch all the more strictly because you see that others are overcome. And be you doubly diligent where you perceive that others are negligent. Dare, like Eleazar, to stand alone and, from the shortcomings of others, gather motives for a nobler life!

Perhaps Eleazar on that occasion was the better off for not having that cowardly rout at his heels. When we have good work to do for our Lord, we are glad of the company of kindred spirits determined to make the good work succeed. But if we have no such comrades, we must go alone. There is no absolute necessity for numbers. Who knows? The friends we invite might be more hindrance than assistance. When Luther went to a holy man and told him what he had discovered in the Scriptures, the prudent old gentleman replied, "My Brother, go back to your cell, keep your thoughts to yourself, serve God and make no disturbance." Dear old soul, he little dreamed what disturbance that Luther was going to make in the camp! I daresay Luther would not have been able to work such a reformation if he had been surrounded by a host of kind, prudent friends! But when, like the hero of our text, he was clear of all the excellent incapables, he made splendid havoc of the Philistines of Rome! When dear, good, motherly Christian men are forever saying, "Do not be too venturesome, be careful never to offend, do not over-exert yourself," and all that kind of talk, a man is better without them than with them! A Christian should seek the help of his Brothers and Sisters, but, at the same time, if he is called to a service for his Lord and they will not aid him, let him not be alarmed, but let him consider that if he has God with him he has all the allies he needs! The mighty God of Jacob is better than all the armies of the saints! And if He shall put out His hand and say, "Go in this, your might," a man may be content to step forth alone—the solitary champion of Jesus and His Gospel! Solitary prowess is expected of Believers. I hope we may breed in this place a race of men and women who know the Truth of God and also know what the Lord claims at their hands—and are resolved, by the help of the Holy Spirit—to war a good warfare for their Lord whether others will stand at their side or not!

II. Secondly, we have, next, in the text, A LESSON OF PERSONAL WEAKNESS.

This brave man, though he arose and smote the Philistines, was only a man, and so he fought on "until his hand was weary," and he could do no more. He reached the limit of his strength and was obliged to pass. This may somewhat console those noble men who have become brain-weary in the service of God. Perhaps they chide themselves, but indeed there is no reason for so doing, for of them it may be said as of Eleazar, that they are not weary *of* fighting, though they are weary *in* fighting. If you can draw that distinction in your case, it will be well. We wish we could serve our Lord day and night, but the flesh is weak and there is no

more strength left in us. This is no strange thing and there is no sin in it. Eleazar's weariness was that of bone, muscle, sinew—the weariness of his arm—but sometimes God's people grow weary in the brain, and this is quite as painful and quite as little to be wondered at. The mind cannot always think with equal clearness, or feel with equal emotion, or find utterance with equal clearness—and the child of God must not blame himself for this. To blame himself in such a case would be to blame his Master. If your servant has been in the harvest field from daybreak till the moon has looked down upon him as he binds his sheaves, and if, as he wipes the sweat from his brow, he says, "Master, I am sorely wearied, I must have a few hours' sleep," who but a tyrant would blame him and refuse him the rest? Those *are* to be blamed who never weary themselves, but those who wear themselves out are to be commended, not censured.

Perhaps Eleazar became weary because of the enormous number of his enemies. He cut dozens of them down with his death-bearing sword, but on they came, and still on! It seemed like a repetition of the day when Samson slew heaps upon heaps, and smote Philistia hip and thigh with great slaughter. Christian Friend, you have been the means of bringing some few to Christ, but the appalling number of the unconverted oppresses you till your mind is weary. You have opened a little room and a few poor people attend, but you say to yourself, "What are these among so many?" When we begin in the Master's service, we think we shall turn the world upside down in six weeks—but we do not do it and when we find that we must plod on and not despise the day of small things—we are apt to become weary. Lifelong service under great discouragement is not as easy as mere dreamers think.

Perhaps Eleazar grew tired because nobody was helping him. It is a great assistance to receive a word of good cheer from a comrade and to feel that, after all, you are not alone, for other true hearts are engaged in the same battle, zealous for the same Lord! But as Eleazar looked around, he saw only the backs of the retreating swords who ought to have been fighting by his side, and he had to mow down the Philistines with his lone sword. Who marvels that at length he grew weary?

The mercy of it all is this—that *he only became weary when he could afford to be so*—that is to say, the Lord did not allow his weariness to overcome him till he had beaten the Philistines and the people had rushed upon the spoil. We are such very feeble creatures that faintness must come over us at times, but what a mercy it is that the Lord makes our strength equal to our day! And only when the day is over does He let us sink into ourselves. Jacob wrestled with the Angel and he did not feel the shrinking sinew till he had won the blessing. It was good for him to go limping on his thigh after his victory—to make him know that it was not by his own strength that he had prevailed with God. And so it was a good thing for Eleazar to feel weary, for he would now understand where the strength came from with which he smote the Philistines. Eleazar only failed when there was spoil to be divided—and if you and I only shrink back when there is praise to be awarded, we need not be troubled, for

there are plenty who have never done anything else who will be quite ready to claim the credit of all that is achieved!

Let us ask ourselves whether, weak as we are, we have given up ourselves to the Lord. If so, all is well, He will use our weakness and glorify Himself by it. He will not let our weakness show itself when it could endanger the victory. He gives us strength up to the point where strength is absolutely essential—and if He lets us collapse, as Elijah did after his great conflict was over—we must not be surprised. What a difference there is between Elijah on Carmel triumphant over the priests of Baal, and the same man on the morrow fleeing from Jezebel and crying, “Let me die, for I am no better than my fathers.” Of course that was the natural result of the strong excitement through which he had passed, just as the weariness of his hands was the natural result of the mighty battle which Eleazar had fought. And when you become downcast, as I often am after having obtained a great blessing, do not be so very terribly alarmed about it. What does it matter? The work is over! You can afford to be laid low before God. It will be well for you to know how empty and how weak you are, that you may ascribe all Glory to the Lord alone. He is almighty, however weak you may be!

III. There is a third lesson in the text, and that concerns THE INTENSITY OF THE HERO'S ZEAL.

A singular circumstance is here recorded—his hand stuck to his sword. Mr. Bunyan seems to have thought that it was the congealed blood which fastened the hand and the sword together, for he represents Mr. Valiant-for-Truth as being wounded till the blood ran forth and his hand was glued to his sword. But perhaps the better interpretation refers to the fact which has occasionally been observed in battles. I remember reading of a sailor who fought desperately in repelling a boarding attack from an enemy's ship. And when the battle was over, it was found that he could not open his hand to drop his cutlass. He had grasped it with such force that until a surgical operation had been performed, it was quite impossible to separate his hand from his sword!

This was the case with Eleazar—this sticking of his hand to the sword proves *the energy with which he gripped his weapon*. At the first, he laid hold upon it in the right way, so that he could hold it firmly. I wish that some of our converts would get hold of the Gospel in a better manner. A missionary said to me, the other day, “There are numbers of revival converts who will never be worth anything till they are converted again.” I am afraid it is so. The work is not deep, their understanding of the Gospel is not clear and their hold of it is not fast. They have got something which is of great good to them, I hope, but they hardly know what it is! They have need to come again to Him who has abundance of Grace and Truth to bestow, or they will never be worth much. Many young people do not study the Word—they pick up texts here and there as pigeons pick up peas, but they do not see the analogy of faith. But he is the man to fight for God who lays hold of the Truth of God by the handle and

grips it as though he knew what he had—and knew that he had got it. He who intelligently and intensely knows the Word is likely to hold it fast!

Eleazar, having grasped his sword well, *retained his hold*. Whatever happened to him in battle, he never let go of his weapon for an instant. If he had once opened his hand, there would have been no sticking, but he all the way through kept his hand on his weapon! According to some modern teachers, you are wise if you change your doctrines every week, because some fresh light may be expected to break in upon you. The advice is dangerous! O young man, I trust you will get hold of the grand old Gospel and always hold it and never relax your grip! And then what will happen to you? Why this—that at last you will not be able to relax your grip! I have frequently been delighted to observe the perseverance of earnest workers who have loved their work for Christ so heartily that they could not cease from it. They have served the Lord year after year in a particular work, either at the Sunday school or in some other useful labor. And when they have been ill and could no longer be in their places, their hearts and their thoughts have still been there! We have known them when ill with high fever, talking continually about the schools and the children. In their very dreams their good work has been on their minds—their hand has been stuck to the sword!

I delight to hear the old man talk about the work of the Lord even when he can no longer join in it. And the dying man with “the ruling passion strong in death,” enquiring about the Church and the services—his sword still sticking to his hand. Christmas Evans was known to drive his old pony from town to town in his journeys to preach the Gospel. And when he was about to die, he thought he was still riding in the old pony-chaise—and his last words were, “Drive on.” Napoleon with his dying breath exclaimed, “Head of the army,” and so do Christ’s soldiers think to the last of the grand army of the saints and of Christ their Head. When a certain good man lay dying, he had forgotten his wife and his children. But, yes, when the name of Jesus was whispered in his ear, he said, “Oh, I know Him! He has been all my joy these fifty years!” See how the sword sticks to the hand!

Years ago, we who have believed grasped the sword of the Lord with such a grip of cheerful earnestness that now there is established an almost involuntary connection between the two which cannot be severed. Every now and then some wise men think to convert us to skepticism, or what is very like it—modern thought—and they approach us with full assurance that we must give up our old-fashioned faith. They are fools for their pains, for we are at this time hardly voluntary agents in the matter—the Gospel has such hold upon us that we cannot let it go! We now believe because we must. I could sooner die a thousand deaths than renounce the Gospel I preach! The sophisticated arguments I have met with in skeptical books are not half as strong as the arguments with which the devil has assailed me! And yet, by His Grace, I have beaten him. Having run with them, the footmen cannot make us afraid. How can we give up the Gospel? It is our life, our soul, our all! Our daily experience, our communion with God, our sitting with Christ in heavenly

places have made us invincible against all temptations to give up our hope! We hold our sword, it is true, but our sword also sticks to our hand. It is not possible that the most clever lies should deliver the elect, for the Lord has created such communion between the renewed soul and the Truth of God, that the Truth must hold us, and we must hold the Truth till we die. God grant it may be so with all of you!

IV. I must pass on to notice the fourth lesson. That concerns THE DIVINE GLORY.

Does the text say that his hand stuck unto the sword and that he worked a great victory that day? Look at your Bibles and you will see that I have been misquoting! It does not ascribe the victory to *Eleazar*, but it is written, “and the Lord worked a great victory that day.” The victory was not won *without* Eleazar and yet it was not won *by* Eleazar, but by the Lord! Had Eleazar belonged to a certain class of professors, he would have said, “We can do nothing, the Lord will fulfill His own eternal purposes,” and then he would not only have done nothing, but he would have found fault with others if they had been forward in the fight! If he had belonged to another class of professors, he would have said, “I do not believe in the one-man ministry. I will not go alone, but wait till I have gathered a few Brothers who can all take a turn at it.” Instead of either of these theories, Eleazar went straight to his work and the Lord gave him the necks of his enemies! And then he ascribed the victory, not to himself, but to the Lord! The right thing to do is to work as if all depended upon us and yet look to the Lord, alone, knowing that all depends upon Him. We must have all the humility and all the activity of men who feel that they cannot do anything by themselves, but that God works in them to will and to do according to His own good pleasure. You must be humbly God-reliant and personally resolute. Trust in God and keep your powder dry! Have you won a soul to Christ? Then the Lord has won the victory! Have you upheld the Truth of God against an antagonist? The Lord must have the glory of your triumph! Have you trampled down sin? Can you cry with the heroine of old, “O my Soul, you have trodden down strength”? Then, lay your trophies at the foot of the Throne of God! I am glad that my text runs as it does, or else some captious critic would have said that I was exalting man and honoring flesh and blood. No, no! The Lord has worked all our works in us! Not unto us, but unto His name give all the praise!

V. The last lesson is one of ENCOURAGEMENT. It is said in the text that “the people returned after him only to spoil.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, does it grieve you to think that many professed Christians seem more like unbelievers than Believers? Do you feel sad to see them all run away in the day of battle? Be comforted, then, for they can be brought back! And your personal prowess for God may be the means of making them return. The feeble folk, if the Lord makes you strong, will gather courage from your bravery. They may not have been able to look a live Philistine in the face, but they knew how to strip a dead one! You will get them back, by-and-by, when the spoil is to be di-

vided. It is not a small thing, after all, to encourage the Lord's downcast people. Eleazar was pleased to see them in the field again. I daresay he did not say one rebuking word to them, but perhaps remarked, "Well, you have come back, have you? Share the plunder among yourselves!. I might claim it all myself, but I will not—you are welcome to it." It has sometimes happened that one man, speaking in God's name, has turned a community in the right way. One Christian woman, too, has saved thousands. There are points in the history of England where certain individuals have been the hinge upon which our nation's destiny has turned. If you seek of God to be faithful, and if His Grace is in you, then be firm in the day of battle and you will confirm other wavering souls. My young Sister, you will yet turn your family around—one by one they will come to seek our Savior! Young Brother, you are entering into that large house of business. It is very perilous to yourself, but if the Lord enables you to be strong in the power of His might, you may transform that whole house into a Church of God! You may hardly believe it, but you will yet have Prayer Meetings in that large room! Remember Mr. Sankey's hymn—

***"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"***

Dare to be an Eleazar and go forth and smite the Philistines alone! You will soon find that there are others in the house who have concealed their sentiments—but when they see you coming forward—they will be openly on the Lord's side. Many cowards are skulking about—try to shame them. Many are undecided—let them see a brave man and he will be the standard-bearer around whom they will rally!

Thus have I thought to say a few practical words which I hope the Lord will bless. I have finished when I have made one observation to a different class of people. It is clear that when a man gets hold of a sword, grips it fast, and holds it for a while, such a thing may happen that he cannot drop it. Has it ever occurred to you—to you especially who have never given your hearts to Christ—that the eager way in which you hold your sin—and the long time that you have held it—may produce a similar result upon you? One of these days you may be unable to get rid of those habits which you are now forming! At first, the net of habit is made of cobwebs. You can soon break through it. By-and-by it is made of twine. Soon it will be made of rope and, last of all, it will be strong as steel—and then you will be fatally ensnared! Beware in time! Young man, you are hardly yet aware how strong a hold your habits have already taken upon you. I mean your habits of prayerlessness, your practice of secret sin and your intemperance. No, I will not mention all your follies—they are best known to yourself. They are fastening upon you like huge serpents, coil upon coil. You have always intended to go so far and no further, but if you could see a picture of what you will become, you would be horrified!

Did we not read in the papers, a few months ago, the story of a man who was respectable in many ways, and gifted above the average of men, who nevertheless descended by degrees, till he perpetrated a horrible crime which made the world stand aghast? Little did he dream, at one

time, that he would have plunged into such wickedness! But the path to Hell is downhill and if you descend one step, at first, you take two steps at once next time, and then you take four, and so by great leaps descend to Hell. O Man, cast away the weapon of iniquity before it glues itself to your hand! Cast it away at once and forever!

The only way of breaking with sin is to unite with Christ. No man does in heart part with sin till he is one with his Savior—and that comes by trusting Him, simply trusting Him. When you trust Him, He delivers you from sinful habits and no longer allows you to be the slave of evil. “If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.” Seek that freedom! May He bestow it upon everyone of us and then may we become heroes for Christ—and He shall have the glory, forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 106.

In this Psalm we have the story of God’s ancient Covenant people. And as we read it, we may read our own history in it if we also are His people. It is a mirror in which the beholder may see himself.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD.* The Psalm begins with Hallelujah. The story of the Church is a succession of Hallelujahs—and the story of every Christian’s life concerning the wonderful forbearance of God to him is a series of Hallelujahs.

1. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* That is the text and this Psalm is the sermon upon it—an exhibition of the goodness and ever-enduring mercy of God!

2, 3. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can show forth all His praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that does righteousness at all times.* These are the really blessed people! And we shall see in this Psalm how God’s ancient people so often missed that blessing by their sin, as I doubt not that we, also, miss much of the sacred, sweet blessedness which would be ours if we walked more closely with God and were more obedient to Him.

4, 5. *Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.* This is a suitable prayer for each one of us to pray before we go any further. May God hear the cries of His people as we each one seek the fivefold blessing!

6. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.* God has dealt kindly and graciously with us, yet here is an all too true description of what we have done! “We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.”

7. *Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.* [See Sermon #2204, Volume 37—SIN—ITS SPRINGHEAD, STREAM AND SEA—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Yet they were very plain, easy to understand, for they were the wonders of power that were worked by God on behalf of His people! But they understood them not.

7. *They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies.* They had bad memories as well as bad understandings. And it is so often with us—we remember not the multitude of God’s mercies to us.

7. *But provoked You at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* That was a bad beginning. They were only just out of Egypt and they had not yet crossed the Red Sea, but they provoked the Lord even there. Oh, how soon after our first joy does our evil nature betray itself!

8. *Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known.* [See Sermon #115, Volume 3—WHY ARE MEN SAVED?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He saved them, not for their own sakes, but for His name’s sake, for the manifestation of His own power and glory. This is how God still deals with His children—not on the ground of their merits, but for the manifestation of His own mercy and Grace toward them!

9-12. *He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.* [See Sermon #72, Volume 2—ISRAEL AT THE RED SEA—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise.* I would think they believed God’s words when they could see His wonderful works, but it is a poor faith that needs miracles to be worked each hour or else it fails. No wonder they sang God’s praise at the Red Sea, but, exultant as the songs of Moses and Miriam were, even better is that praise which rises from a broken and contrite heart which the Lord has delivered out of its trouble!

13-15. *They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.* So it always is with us when we begin to let our desires outrun the will of God. He will sometimes let us discover our own folly by granting us our desires. The answer to some prayers would be a dire calamity! Some pray for riches, and they get it—but they also get leanness in their soul. Some ask for earthly honors and success, and get them, but with them they also get leanness in their soul. And if a man is lean in his soul, it is not much good being fat anywhere else.

16. *They also envied Moses in the camp.* Envy is a gaunt, lean, spectral thing—and when a soul is lean, it soon gets to be envious of others who are better than itself.

16-20. *And Aaron the saint of the LORD. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their Glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass.* What a descent it was to come down from worshipping the spiritual God who had worked such wonders for them, to the adoration of “an ox that eats grass.” When we put our trust in men, instead of in God, we might have the same sort of ironical description applied to us, “They trusted in a man that must die,

and in the son of man that is but dust.” Whenever we forsake the Lord and put our confidence in anyone else, we are fools, indeed!

21-23. *They forgot God their savior, who had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome things by the Red Sea. Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.* You remember the intercession of Moses with the Lord, how he cried, “If You will, forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written.” And, beloved Friends, what would you and I have done if it had not been for the Mediator, far greater than Moses, who has stood in the breach every time when we have provoked the Lord—and who has so stood in the breach that He has borne the wrath of God which otherwise would have destroyed us?

24. *Yes, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word.* They said that the land that flowed with milk and honey was a land that ate up the inhabitants thereof, and that was full of giants—and they could not drive them out.

25. *But murmured in their hearts, and listened not unto the voice of the LORD.* Do we ever fall into this sin of murmuring in the family, murmuring in the counting-house, murmuring against men and murmuring against God, as they murmured in their tents?

26-28. *Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.* They turned aside from the pure worship of the living God to hold communion with departed spirits! They fell into all the horrible abominations of the heathen among whom they dwelt.

29, 30. *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke out upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment and so the plague was stopped.* God always has somebody to stand up for Him—it is Moses one day, and Phinehas another. He will not permit His people to utterly quit their faith and be destroyed!

31-33. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore. They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sake: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.* It is not surprising that Moses should have spoken as he did to people who so worried and wearied him with their rebellions and murmurings! Yet you see that God dealt sternly with His servant because of his sin and He will do the same with those of us who bear the vessels of the Lord. The higher our office, the greater our responsibility. One slip of temper in the meek Moses shuts him out of the Promised Land! So see what sin will do and see how one who sins in a smaller degree than others may be made a scapegoat for them.

34-36. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen and learned their work. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.* God

warned them that it would be so! He told them that they must drive out those Canaanites and not make a league with them, or else they would be sure to be led astray by them.

37, 38. *They even sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.* Yet these were God's people whom He brought out of Egypt—whom He tutored in the wilderness, whom He fed with manna, and to whom He gave miraculous streams from the Rock—these were the only people in the world whom God had chosen as His own! The rest were sitting in darkness, yet see at what degradation they had fallen!

39. *Thus were they defiled with their own words, and played the harlot by their own inventions.* They were not true to God—they plunged into every kind of uncleanness.

40, 41. *Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them.* Read the history of God's ancient people and you will see how often this occurred.

42-44. *Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless—*[See Sermon #1886, Volume 32—GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Oh, that wonderful, "nevertheless"—*

44-48. *He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry: and for their sake He remembered His Covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise the LORD. And well we may!*

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