

TEMPLE GLORIES

NO. 375

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 31, 1861,
DELIVERED BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endures forever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God”
2 Chronicles 5:13, 14.

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from Heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good. For His mercy endures forever.”
2 Chronicles 7:1, 2, 3.

IN the wilderness God showed His glorious presence in the midst of the camp of Israel. To show His secret indwelling in His Church—in the innermost chamber of the sacred tent there perpetually beamed the bright and ineffable light of the Shekinah and to manifest His visible presence to protect and guide His flock, a pillar of cloud covered the people by day, screening them from the burning heat of the sun, so that in that extremely hot and terrible region they were delivered from excessive heat. And at night lest they should feel forsaken in the midst of the desolate darkness of the desert, this pillar of cloud became a pillar of fire.

There was light throughout all their dwellings, for I suppose that this pillar of fire like a luminous atmosphere covered the entire camp. They had thus a sun and a shield. They had light in darkness and salvation from the heat—their shelter was God’s wing, their light gleamed from His eye. Now the thought had fallen into the heart of David to build for God a house instead of the tent in which He was willing to dwell, which, by reason of years, had no doubt grown old and somewhat shorn of its glories. He purposed to build a permanent structure.

Solomon, his son, carried out the purpose of David. The temple was built. We have no precise idea of the architecture and appearance of this

glorious edifice. The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, are thought by some to have been vast castings of brass, set up in front rather for ornament than service, like the enormous obelisks in the gateways of the Egyptian temples. Others conceive that these renowned columns supported the entablature of the portico. In either case they were stupendous in size and beautified in the most elaborate manner. The building itself was not large, but exceedingly magnificent.

We make a great mistake when we think of Solomon's temple as being famous for size. It was scarcely half as long and barely half as wide as this present house, or that the area was not one fourth of this which is now crowded with immortal souls. It was sixty cubits long in the center and using the most liberal calculation which can be given the cubit it measured but one hundred feet. If the cubit be half-a-yard, the breadth was but ninety feet. There are hundreds of Christian Churches which excel that marvelous building in mere size. Its chief fame lay in the countless treasures lavished upon it. One of the most reasonable calculations of the expense of that gorgeous structure is one hundred and twenty million pounds, while other estimates arrive at the inconceivable sum of one thousand millions.

The wonder is how they could have used such an amount as even the smaller sum. Whatever it might have been, it would have been a vain-glorious work, unless in that temple there had been the same manifestation of the Divine presence as had been given in the tabernacle. Now these were two, *the cloud* and *the fire*. The two passages of Scripture which I have read to you give you two pictures. In the first you have the cloud, in the second you have the fire. And in these two together you have the sacred mystic symbols of the presence of the Eternal God in the midst of His people. Oh, that now, tonight, though no visible cloud shall be seen, though no fire shall burn the bullock and the ram, yet may faith discern *the cloud* and may experience in the heart perceive *the fire* and may each of us say, "God was with us of a Truth." And add, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He spoke with us by the way?"

I. The first passage of Scripture, which I read in your hearing, affords me the first head of my discourse. You will perceive that the people were gathered together to praise God. Then THE CLOUD appeared, the priests were no longer able to minister, for God had claimed the great house as being exclusively His own.

Let us note the *occupation* in which they were engaged. They were praising God. Let us mark how they performed this work. You will perceive, that they did it *unanimously*. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord." What a joyous thing it is to hear the thousands praise God at once—every man contributing to the song—the poor coarse voice belonging to some of us who never can learn music, let us try as much as we will. The flute-like voices of our sisters, the deep resounding mellow bass of the full-developed man.

All the different tones and notes and voices, perhaps expressive of our different degrees and growths in grace, of our different trials and our different temperaments—all join to swell one common hymn which rolls upward to the Throne of God. Every man who refuses to praise God mars the song. Every dumb lip spoils the music. Every silent tongue has a disas-

trous effect upon the unanimity and oneness of the choir. Let us *all* praise the Lord! Let all creatures that have breath praise Him. Let the Heaven of heavens extol Him. We can never expect to have God in this house, or in our own houses, or in our own hearts until we begin to praise Him. Unless as a people we unanimously, with one heart, though with many tongues, extol the King of kings, farewell to the hope that He will give us His presence in the future.

Oh, my dear Brethren, let us look back upon the past! Who among us is not a debtor to mercy? "Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God," and never tasted of His grace, be silent. Be silent, O tongue, if you have never tasted of the goodness of the Lord. Breath, be wasted on the air if your mouth has never been satisfied with good things. But, my Soul, if your life is His gift and your joy His mercy, let no wicked silence bury His praise. He has been so good, so kind, so generous to everyone of us without exception that we can and must each one of us, according to our ability, with heart and voice, praise, laud and bless His name always.

But then you perceive they not only sang unanimously, but they shouted *heartily*. In some of our churches, there are half-a-dozen people dressed in white, who stand up to praise the Lord or rather to magnify the music leader. In many of our dissenting congregations, some five or six who are the choir, sing to the praise and glory of themselves and the people sit still and listen, not daring to spoil music so magnificent. In many other places, it is thought most seemly to delegate the work of human hearts and tongues and lips to some instrument which shall praise the Lord. May that never be the case here.

As often as we meet together here may the song roll up to Heaven like the voice of many waters and like great thunders. A little God might deserve little praise, but the Great God deserves the great praise of all His creatures. I have noticed that in business many men show a great deal of energy. But in singing God's praises they are almost as mute as Matthew's fish. They can listen to the notes, but they do not attempt to join. They have no objection that others should sing, but they are mute themselves. Oh, let us sing to our God! And heartily, too! And if the voice is not so well tuned as we could wish, yet if the *heart* be in tune, God will accept the song and even angel notes shall not be more acceptable.

Fathers love to hear the voices of their own children—why should our heavenly Father have a dumb family? Mr. Rowland Hill was one day in the pulpit and an old woman among the crowd got right up to the pulpit steps. She had the art of singing through her nose and she sung so desperately bad, that good old Rowland turned round and said to her—"Hold your tongue, my good woman, you spoil the singing." "Oh, Sir!" she said, "it comes from my heart, Mr. Hill. It comes from my heart." "Sing away, good soul," said he, "sing away as much as ever you like. I am sure I beg your pardon for interrupting you."

And so would I say to every man who, in God's house, cannot sing as he would—if it comes from the *heart* we could not interrupt you—for the very stones would speak if they who fear God and have tasted of His grace did not exalt and extol Him. But if you will not praise God in earnest, you must not expect to see *the cloud* of His presence. Remember it was when with one *heart*—with a mighty sound they praised God that the cloud suddenly made its appearance.

Then notice next, that their praise was *Scriptural praise*. They sung that old Psalm, "His mercy endures forever." Now you, I dare say, thought when I was reading that Psalm there was not much in it. It was a repetition—a monotony. It was striking the same note again and again—ringing the same bell. Well, this just shows that God does not require in our song the display of great poetical ability. He does not need that the verses should have in them flights of rhapsody or dreams of fancy. Let the rhyme be good by all means. Let the syllables each of them have their proper length. God always should have the best of the best. But better is the wild song of the revivalist with the homely street tune, sung from the very soul than the noblest music that was ever penned, or ever cowed from human lips, if the heart is absent and if the strain is not in accordance with God's Word.

The more Scriptural our hymns are the better. In fact there will never be found music which can excel old David's Psalms. Let us interpret them in an evangelical spirit, let us fill them full of the Gospel of Christ, of which they are, indeed, already full in prophecy and we shall sing the very words of the Spirit and shall surely edify each other and glorify our God. If tonight, then, our music has been Scriptural, if our praise has been hefty, if our song has been unanimous, if we have sung of that mercy which endures forever, we have good cause to expect that God will manifest Himself to us and faith will perceive the cloud.

That is a grand old Calvinistic Psalm, "*His mercy endures forever.*" What Arminian can sing that? Well, he *will* sing it, I dare say. But if he is a thorough-going Arminian he really cannot enjoy it and believe it. You can fall from grace, can you? Then how does His mercy endure forever? Christ bought with His blood some that will be lost in Hell, did He? Then how did His mercy endure forever? There are some who resist the offers of Divine grace and after all that the Spirit of God can do for them, yet disappoint the Spirit and defeat God!? How, then, does His mercy endure forever? No, no, this is no hymn for you, this is the Calvinist's hymn. This is the hymn which you and I will sing as long as life shall last and going through the dark valley of the shadow of death we will make the shades resound with the joyous strain—

***"For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."***

It was while the people were thus engaged that on a sudden that cloud which before floated over the tabernacle made its appearance over the temple. But this time, instead of hanging over the roof, it descended and entered into the courts and filled the sacred places. The priests were standing, each of them, in his proper place, swinging to and fro the sacred censers and making a sweet perfume. Others of them were standing at the altar waiting till the time should come for sacrifice. But no sooner did this cloud fill the house than the priests ceased to minister. They felt there was no room for man, for God had filled the place.

Brethren, will you give me your attention while I try to picture to you what shall be the effect if God shall be pleased to fill this house with His glory? I can conceive the effect upon that vast assembly on that august day of the dedication. The glory of God had filled the house and *the priests were set aside*. Where God is, man is forgotten. You will think little of the minister save for his work's sake—you will talk the less of the man when

you shall see the Master. This house shall cease to be called by my name and shall be called by God's name. If God shall fill the place, it will be to your souls not the house where you can sit to hear this man or that, but the place where you shall see the beauty of God and enquire in His temple.

You will love your pastor. You will cherish your elders. You will rally round your deacons. You will, as a Church, recognize the bonds of your Church-relationship—but pastor, elders, deacons, Church—all will be merged and all forgotten if the glory of the Lord shall fill the house. This has been the effect always of great revivals—no man has ever been very apparent. When God blessed the world through Whitfield and Wesley, who were they and what thought they of themselves? “Less than nothing they became when God was All in All.” The up-going of priests is the dishonor of the High Priest Christ Jesus—but when priestcraft ceases to be and is cast down—then the Lord alone is exalted in that day.

May the Lord here, while He uses human instrumentality, let you all see that “it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord.” This has indeed been my mission, to show the power of God in human weakness. I do acknowledge and confess what is so continually said of me, “The man is not educated”—*Granted*. “His periods are unpolished”—*Granted*. “His manner is rough”—*Be it so, if you will*. “Himself a fool”—*Yes, amen and whatever else you choose*. Gather together all the epithets in the catalogue of abuse—come heap them here. But who has done *this*, who has saved souls and called the people to His footstool? Why, if the instrument is mean, the more glory be to Him that used it!

And if the man is nothing, “I glory in infirmity, that the power of God may rest upon me.” Make me less and less. I pray you do it. Let it be so. But still, O God, use this poor ox-goad, make it still mighty to the slaying of Philistines and make Your Word still a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let the Lord fill the house and man will be forgotten.

Besides this, you can easily picture in your minds what *a solemn awe fell on all who were gathered that day* when once that cloud had filled the house. Perhaps there were in that vast assembly some who came there flippantly, to see the edifice. There were some who had heard of its plates of gold. They had heard of its brazen laver, they had listened to the stories of the great stones which Hiram, king of Tyre, had floated on rafts to Joppa and they came to see the place. There were others, too, who had contributed largely to the erection. They came to be seen—that the king might thank them for the gift—that the people might see their generous benefactors.

These motives, we admit were base, but the motives were lost and forgotten when once the glory of God filled the house. Then they felt the place was too solemn to be looked at as a mere display. They thought it, then too awful to be regarded as their own and on the breast of every Israelite might have been read these words, “This is none other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven,” for God had filled the house.

Then, too, you may believe right well that *the saints of God rejoiced*. They had sung before. The prayers made sweet melody. But oh, what music was in their souls when once that cloud had covered all! Methinks they wept for joy. They could not speak. I know I should have been transfixed to that spot. I would have said—

“Come, then, expressive silence; hymn His praise,”

for oh, when God is present how can we tell our joys! Sing unto Him, sing unto Him. Praise Him on the cymbals, praise Him on the high-sounding cymbals. But when you have done, all your joy overflows your words—the music of your hearts excels the music of your lips.

And then, I think I may add safely enough, *the suppliants* of that day *felt they might pray more earnestly* because they prayed surely. God had filled the house—now He would hear their prayers. Whenever they turned their eye to the temple they would meet the eye of God. When for deliverance from sin, pestilence, war, drought, mildew, locusts, or caterpillars they turned their eye towards Zion’s hill—they felt they must be heard, for God had filled the house. Oh, that tonight the people of God may be glad!

Oh, that you may go home as they did from Solomon’s temple, blessing the king, each man, in the gladness of heart and feeling that you may pray for God *will* hear! That God has so manifestly owned this house as His that whensver we shall meet for supplication, though we be but two or three—where prayer is desired to be made—there Christ is in the midst of us to bless us. I ask, my Brethren, that we may have such a manifestation of God that all these effects, in the very highest and fullest degree, may be received and participated in by us.

I have thus preached upon my first text as briefly as I could, leaving the more time to enforce the lesson of the second. You have sung His praise. Now, Lord, fill the house. You have chanted His name, you have lifted up your voices to Him whose mercy endures forever. Oh, King of kings shine forth! Oh, You that dwells between the cherubim, display Yourself to each of us and do it now, for Jesus’ sake!

II. The first text has had reference to the *past*. For mercies received we must praise God if we would be favored with His presence. The next text dwells specially upon the *future*. The people after praise joined with one another in solemn prayer and sacrifice—then was it that THE FIRE came down. They had the cloud before, but now they had the fire and then once again they stood up, after having bowed themselves and they worshipped the Lord and sang once again, “His mercy endures forever.”

I have said in this place five or six times already, that unless my Church shall pray for me and God shall hear their prayers, I am of all men the most miserable. But if your supplications shall be heard in Heaven I am of all men the most blessed by God. Think of this assembly, repeated as it will be Sabbath after Sabbath—what if we should have no food for the saint—what if the Word should never be spoken earnestly to sinners and should therefore be unblest? It will be in vain that this house is filled! In vain did I say? Infinitely worse than that! Will it be nothing that we are associated together in Church-fellowship. Nothing!

It will be everything that shall foretell our future misery unless God is here. In vain the rearing of this structure with all the perseverance that has been used and with all the smiles of God, unless we have His blessing *now*. If ever you prayed for me and for this Church before, pray for us seven times now. Oh, you that are my sons and daughters spiritually—who have been born to God by the preaching of the Word—to you I make my first appeal. I beseech you never cease to pray that here God’s Word may be a quickening, a convincing, a converting Word. The fact is, Brethren, we must have conversion work here. We cannot go on as some

Churches do without converts. We cannot, we will not, we must not, we dare not.

Souls must be converted here and if there are not many born to Christ, may the Lord grant to me that I may sleep in the tomb of my fathers and be heard of no more. Better indeed for us to die than to live if souls are not saved. You, then, who have already been saved under our ministry, make this, I pray you, a matter of daily prayer. You who are members of this Church, who have been long ago in Christ, before our time—I charge you by Him that lives and was dead, be instant in season and out of season with your constant supplications. O Sirs! What shall I do if I have the misfortune to lose my prayer book? And *you* are my prayer book—my litany, my daily collects are all written on my people’s hearts.

Where am I? Like a poor shipwrecked man floating far out at sea upon a raft with no friendly sail in sight, unless I have your daily prayers. But if I have them, I shall be as some well-laden ship floating in the midst of its convoy with many larger vessels and fairer sails which keep it gladsome company in storm and in fair weather, till we all shall reach our port together and at once. Pray for us that our faith fail not, that our pride break not forth. Pray for *us* that *we* may pray. Pray that we may read the Word with a greater understanding of it and that when we stand up to speak, a horn of the oil of the Spirit may anoint our head that we may speak the Words of God and not the words of man.

And with your prayers mingle your sacrifices. Bring each day, each one of you, the precious blood of Christ. Take in your hands handfuls of the frankincense of His merits. Stand each morning and each night before the Divine Throne as the king’s remembrances, putting Him in remembrance of what Jesus did. Plead with Him by *His* agony and bloody sweat, by *His* Cross and passion, by *His* precious death and burial. Plead with Him to save souls. Use the strong arguments of Jesus’ veins. Take to yourselves the Almighty logic of a bleeding Savior’s groans. Stand to it that you will not let the angel go except He bless you.

Back up your prayers with tears. Prove the sincerity of your tears by acts. Live out your prayers. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and then work and strive for it. As one man, with one heart, be you daily crying to your God and seeking by acts of faith to prove the reality of your supplication. And then, mark you—then shall *the fire* come down. We have, I trust, the cloud already. God this week has acknowledged this house to be His. We want the fire. “But what is the difference?” you say. Why, there may be the presence of God in a house after a certain fashion, inasmuch as His people there worship Him. But yet it may not be His *active* presence.

We want not the cloud—the *symbol* of only His being there in mystery—we *need* the *fire* which is the symbol of His acting while He is present. Oh, my Brethren, how much the *preacher* wants the fire! He that has the tongue of flame can soon melt hearts, but what are these poor pieces of clay unless God bid the seraph touch them with a live coal from the altar? Preaching is a farce unless the minister has fire within him. And when the fire is there, preaching is God’s ordained and guaranteed way of bringing souls to Himself.

You have heard preachers, I do not doubt, with an erudition so perfect that you could not fathom their meaning. You have heard them with an eloquence so exalted that you could not explain what it was that they

would set forth. You have listened to some who rather seemed to have lips of ice than lips of fire. You have heard of many who are successful in giving sleep to those who never sleep at home. There are some preachers who can distribute narcotics with a bounteous hand and send at one motion of their deadly arm a whole crowd to sleep. May it never be so here. If we cannot keep you awake it is better ourselves to go to sleep. When the congregation is asleep it is a sign the minister ought to be in bed—where he could be comfortable—rather than in a pulpit where he is mischievous.

But attention may be riveted without feeling being excited. We want *the fire* to make the feeling. Oh, I have heard a man preach a sermon to which an angel might have listened for its faultless truthfulness, but it lacked fire. And I have known another whose ministry was faulty in many respects, rough were his words, the Gospel which he preached was not a full-orbed Gospel, but yet he spoke like a man that meant what he said, with his heart boiling over at his eyes, with his soul rolling out of his mouth in one tremendous cataract and men were moved and the masses flocked and thousands listened and souls were saved because the man was in earnest.

Ah, when I see a man go up into his pulpit and ask the Lord the Holy Spirit to assist him and then opens wide his manuscript and reads it all—I wonder what he means? And when he prays that he may have the tongue of fire and then speaks in such a mumbling cold trivial manner that his hearers detect at once that there is no heart about him—I wonder what he means? Oh, fire of God, come down upon the tongue of the minister! But we need this fire upon the *hearers, too*. How will people listen when they come to hear something! When they come up and do not expect to get anything it is not often they are disappointed. But when they are willing to listen to whatever is to be said in God's name, how delightful, how easy, how pleasant it is to address them!

We need much of that kind of fire. Oh, how we want the ear that is circumcised—the heart that is softened! The minister is the sower. O God, plow the furrows first! The minister is the waterer. Great God, plant the cedar first! We are but the lights. Great God, give the eyes. We are but the trumpets. O Lord, open the ears. We do but speak—Great God, give life that when we speak we may not speak to dead men, but that life may be given through our word. Fire is abundantly wanted upon the hearers.

What a noble effect is produced when once the fire comes down upon a congregation! I will picture you a Church without fire and then one with it. There is a chapel—we will not say where—anywhere you like. On Sabbath morning the minister enters his place. He hardly expects to see it half full. He comes in about five minutes after time. He gives out the hymn—two or three singers rise up and slaughter the praise. The people keep dropping in all through the hymn. Prayer begins and they are dropping in still. The chapter has been read and the second hymn going on. They are coming in still. At last they have got quietly settled.

The clerk has just finished the last verse. He composes himself to his usual sleep. The congregation also prepare themselves for what they are about to receive. Firstly has produced its effect. Secondly is telling upon the people very manifestly. And by the time that thirdly has been given out, perhaps the last pair of eyes will have ceased to gaze upon the pulpit and the vacant face within it. But as you stand in the aisle, you say to

yourself, "Well, this is a sight indeed! That is a good man in the pulpit, but what right has he *there*? These are good people, but what do they come *here* for? There is no earnestness, no life."

The notices have to be given out—"Prayer meeting on Monday evening—lecture on Thursday." Well, we will come on Monday evening. So we go. There is the minister and about four people besides ourselves. There are hardly enough to ask to pray. After one has prayed, the minister will have to pray twice to make up the time. The prayers are twenty minutes long—they are not prayers, they are sermons. If anything, the prayer meeting is duller than the service, for there were people at the one, if no life. But here there are neither people nor life.

Well, we will go and speak presently to the deacons. "Well, friend, how has your Church increased of late?" "Well, Sir, we do not increase. We have not looked to that lately. But Sir, things are very well. We are going on very comfortably." "How long since you have had a baptizing?" "Oh, we had a baptizing in old Dr. So-and-So's time. That is about, I think—let me see—fifteen years ago, I think." "You have not had one since?" "Well, I do not know. We may have had one. We have had some members join from other Churches, but we certainly have not had many." "And are you doing anything in the neighborhood for good?" "Well, no. We have some young people that are a little too rash and hasty. They will not be quite quiet. But our minister does not think there is any use in going out of the old ways. Besides, he says revivals are all wildfire—that the Lord will certainly have His own and that we ought not to exert ourselves beyond the proper limit. You know he says that ministers who preach too often, always die prematurely. Our minister wants to live to a good old age and therefore he is careful of his valuable life."

We will go and see the minister now. We will ask him to let us into the study. Sets of manuscripts!—a bad sign. Shelves full of sermons and very little Puritan theology. Bad sign again. I wonder whether he will let us stop by while he is making a sermon? The way to begin to make a sermon is to bend the knee and to cry to God for direction. That is the first point. He does not do that. He has marked two or three score texts for the next month or two and he has had a bill printed and told the people what he means to preach from, to prove that he is guided by the Spirit for months in advance and not in the same hour when he needs it.

So he looks to see what the text is and takes down various books that he has upon the subject, writes out his Epistle to his Church and the thing is done and he may go out visiting. No groaning over souls, mark, none of Baxter's compassion. No knocking of the knees together as he goes up the pulpit stairs. No sleepless night because he cannot preach as he would. No groaning when he comes home because he thinks there has been a failure where there ought to have been a success. No—the reason is because there is no fire. O God! send down the fire and what a change there will be!

The fire has come. The next Saturday the minister is in his study again and the thought—an awful thought—strikes him, "What if the blood of souls should be at my door?" He gets up. He paces the room—puts his hand upon his forehead. He had never thought of that before! Preaching these years, but he never thought he was responsible for men—never imagined that he must certainly be either his brother's keeper, or his

brother's murderer. He cannot stand it. That discourse he was going to deliver will not do. He will take another. A text comes to his mind. It shall be this—"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters!"

When he wakes on Sabbath morning. He is all in fear—Suppose he should break down! He lifts up his heart to God. He prays for help. He goes up into the pulpit. He is trembling. He begins to speak. The people do not know what to make of it—the minister is different from anything he was before. He begins to speak to everyone that thirsts and now he begins to cry, "Ho!" He never spoke so loud as that before! Now he begins to plead, "Come you to the waters!" They never saw him stretch his hands out to plead before. "And he that has no money, come, buy wine and milk." And the tears roll down his cheeks and he begins to plead with all the pathos of his nature while he begs souls to come to Christ, to come to Christ, to come to Christ.

The old sleepers find they cannot sleep. Those who have had the most comfortable nap before cannot effect it now. Eyes gleam—rays flash from many eyeballs which had for months been unconscious of a sympathetic glance. Tears are seen. The minister pleads with God after he has pleaded with men. He comes down to the vestry. The old deacon takes hold of both his hands—"Bless God for such a sermon as this, Sir. It has quite stirred me up. This is how old Dr. So-and-So used to preach. And the next deacon says, "I bless God for this. Don't you think we ought to have a special prayer meeting about it? Better give notice of it this evening."

Prayer meeting next Monday. There are not many, but there are four times as many as there were before. And oh, how they pray! Twenty minutes does not do. They pray ten minutes each. They keep to the point. They do not preach. They pray for God to bless the minister. Next Sabbath morning a fuller house. Sabbath evening crowded. Souls are awakened, God is blessing the Word—saints pray, sinners tremble. The neighborhood is changed and Christ is glorified. This is the effect of the fire. O God, send the fire here!

But you will perceive, it is said that the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the house. The first time the priests could do nothing and they stopped where they were. The second time they had to be more forgotten still, for they could not stay in the house. Let God send the fire of His Spirit here and the minister will be more and more lost in His Master. You will come to think less of the speaker and more of the Truth spoken. The individual will be swamped. The words spoken will rise above everything.

When you have the cloud, the man is forgotten. When you have the fire, the man is lost and you only see his Master. Suppose the fire should come here and the Master be seen more than the minister—what then? Why, this Church will become two, or three, or four thousand strong! It's easy enough in God to double our numbers, vast though they be. We shall have the lecture hall beneath this platform crowded at each prayer meeting and we shall see in this place young men devoting themselves to God. We shall find young ministers raised up and trained and sent forth to carry the fire to other parts.

Japan, China and Hindustan shall have heralds of the Cross who have here had their tongues touched with the flame. The whole earth shall receive benedictions. If God shall bless us, He will make us a blessing unto

all. Let but God send down the fire and the biggest sinners in the neighborhood will be converted. Those who live in the dens of infamy will be changed. The drunkard will forsake his cups, the swearer will repent his blasphemy, the debauched will leave their lusts—

***“Dry bones be raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone be turned to flesh.”***

If there is anywhere within these walls tonight a man who has not been within a place of worship for these last twenty years. If there are others who have forfeited all claim to honor and all title to respect, Great God, make these the first-fruits of Your power! Make them now instances of Your mercy, trophies of Your grace! This will be the effect of that fire which of old consumed the sacrifice and which today consumes our sins and fires our works, our songs, our prayers, till all smoke up to Heaven and God accepts them as an offering of a sweet smell.

I shall not detain you longer, having thus set before your mind's eye the two things for which we should earnestly seek and for which we should cry to God. I shall close by simply preaching the Gospel and I do not think that on this first occasion I can do it better than by simply telling the story of how I was brought to Christ myself.

I had been for years as a child in secret the prey of the most desponding feelings. One thought had crushed me. I was a sinner and God was angry with the wicked every day. I began to pray, prayer gave me no comfort, but made my burden more heavy. I read the Bible, the Bible was full of threats to me. I could find no promises there. I attended the house of God constantly but I never knew from all the preaching that I heard what I must do to be saved. My eyes were blind and my soul ignorant. I heard a practical preacher, but what was the use of practice. It was like teaching a man to march who had no feet. I heard the Law thundered but it was not thunder that I wanted—but notes of mercy.

I hope that no creature ever had more intense and awful sorrow of heart than I under conviction of sin—feelings which I studied to conceal from all—and I was thought to be dull and idle because I had little heart for anything. As I have said before, I prayed daily and constantly but my groans seemed to be reverberated from a brazen Heaven and God gave no mercy to me. It might have been so to this day if it had not been for the purpose and Providence of God which prevented me from going to my usual place of worship and compelled me to turn into a little Primitive Methodist chapel.

Now that day was so snowy that there were very few people there and the minister did not come. I think he was snowed up. But they found out some poor man, a local preacher and he was put into the pulpit. Blessed be God. Blessed be God for that poor local preacher. He read his text. It was as much as he could do. The text was, “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” He was an ignorant man, he could not say much, he was obliged to keep to his text. Thank God for that. He began, “*Look*, that is not hard work. You need not lift your hand, you do not want to lift your finger. *Look*, a fool can do that. It does not need a wise man to look. A child can do that. You don't need to be full grown to use your eyes.

“*Look*, a poor man may do that, no need of riches to look. *Look*—how simple—how simple.” Then he went on, “look unto Me. Do not look to

yourselves, but look to Me, that is, Christ. Do not look to God the Father to know whether you are elected or not, you shall find that out afterwards, look to Me. Look to Christ. Do not look to God the Holy Spirit to know whether He has called you or not. That you shall discover by-and-by. Look unto Jesus Christ.” And then he went on in his own simple way to put it thus—“Look unto *Me*. I am sweating great drops of blood for you. Look unto Me, I am scourged and spit upon. I am nailed to the Cross. I die. I am buried. I rise and ascend. I am pleading before the Father’s Throne and all this for *you*.”

Now that simple way of putting the Gospel had enlisted my attention and a ray of light had poured into my heart. Stooping down, he looked under the gallery and said—“Young man, you are very miserable.” So I was, but I had not been accustomed to be addressed in that way. “Ah,” he said, “and you will always be miserable if you don’t do as my text tells you. That is, look unto Christ.” And then he called out, with all his might, “Young man, look! In God’s name look and look now.”

I did look, blessed be God! I know I looked then and there. And he who but that minute ago had been near despair, had the fullness of joy and hope. And that instant he who was ready to destroy himself could have stood up there and then to—“Sing of Him, whose pardoning blood had washed sins away.” And now here I stand to preach in this great building the self-same Gospel in the same simple tones. Sinners, look to Christ and be saved—

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

Oh, Sinners! What if God should make this your spiritual birthday? And it can only be thus, by your simply looking to Christ! Yes, by the prayers of an earnest wife, I beg you look. Oh, young man! By the groans of a loving mother, I beg you care for your soul and look! Yes, old man! By the decline of years and by those gray hairs and the nearness of your grave, I pray you look! Yes, you sons of poverty, by all that you have to suffer here, look, look to Jesus, that you may find in Him eternal riches! And you rich men, if you would not be cursed by your riches, look and find the healing for the diseases of this life! To one and all is the Word of this salvation sent. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house.”

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THE PLACE OF PRAYER AND PARDON NO. 2637

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 27, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 1, 1882.

“Whatever burden or whatever sickness there is: then what prayer or what supplication shall be made of any man, or of all Your people Israel, when everyone shall know his own burden and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house: then hear You from Heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart You know (for You, only, know the hearts of the children of men).”
2 Chronicles 6:28-30.

THE Temple was intended to be the center of prayer for all the children of Israel. Those who could do so went up to it a certain number of times every year. Others, who were too far away to go, prayed with their window open towards Jerusalem, for there was the Mercy Seat and beneath the wings of the overshadowing cherubim there dwelt that bright light of the Shekinah which was the index of the Presence of God in the midst of His people. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that when Solomon dedicated to the Lord the Temple which he had built, his great petition was that God would hear every prayer that should be offered in that place or toward that place! He wished the Temple to always be to Israel the token that God's memorial is that He hears prayer. Solomon therefore presented a wonderfully comprehensive series of supplications in which he appears to have included all the sorrowful conditions of the nation and all the troubles that were likely to fall upon the chosen people.

But this part of his prayer, which we are now to consider, seems as though it were intended to gather up anything that the suppliant might possibly have left out. We always think that we are among the great things—that we are out upon the deep seas—when we can get among the “whatevers.” “Whatever burden or whatever sickness there is: then what prayer or what supplication shall be made of any man, or of all Your people Israel...then hear You from Heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive.” It is a sort of miscellaneous sentence, taking up all the stragglers—the lots that are out of the catalog—those that could not be placed under any distinct head. And they are here put under the general description of the “whatevers,” that every man whatever, who should know his own burden and his own grief, and the plague of his own heart, should turn

his eye and his prayer toward Jerusalem—and that God should then hear him and forgive him.

We have no sacred spot now, Beloved Friends, towards which we turn when we pray. The Ritualists talk a great deal about the importance of “the eastward position,” but I believe that any other position in the world—westward, southward, or northward—is just as good and that we may pray to God with equal acceptance whichever way we turn. Cowper truly sings—

***“Jesus, wherever Your people meet,
There they behold Your Mercy Seat!
Wherever they seek You, You are found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

Yet we have a Temple into which they cannot enter who think the mere materialistic building is the all-important matter, just as we have an Altar to which they have no right to approach so long as they are content with the visible and the external. Our Temple is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—“In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” When we pray, we turn our faces toward Him. He said to the Pharisees, “In this place is One greater than the Temple,” and so He is. Though He is to us of the same use as the Temple was to Israel, yet is He infinitely more precious and far greater than the Temple and whoever, whatever his trouble shall be, shall pray unto God with his face toward Jesus, looking to the matchless wounds by which He has redeemed us, or the glorified Person in which He represents us, and invokes intercession for us before the Throne of God on high, he shall be helped, he shall be forgiven, whatever his trouble or whatever his sin!

I. So, coming to the text, I shall, first of all, deal with the fact that EACH MAN HAS, OR WILL HAVE, SOME KIND OF GRIEF AND SORROW.

I may have some in this congregation, who can say, “We have no grief. We have no trouble.” Well, if that is the case, I am not sure that I can congratulate you, though I am very glad when all God’s children are happy in the Lord, and can joy and rejoice in His name. I pray that they may always do so, for I remember how Paul said, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Surely that was enough, yet he added, “and again I say, Rejoice.” You cannot be too happy in the Lord! And whenever you meet others who are of a doubtful or troubled spirit, do not imitate them, though, I pray you, do not despise them! They may be, on the whole, in a better spiritual state than you are, although they are not better than you are as to their present difficulty. “The joy of the Lord is your strength,” and it is an excellent thing for a child of God to be happy and joyful in his Savior. Yet I should not wonder, dear Friend, that the day may come when you, whose eyes are brightest and whose steps are most elastic, will yet find that you shall have trouble in the flesh and, perhaps, trouble in the spirit, too, even as it was with those to whom the Apostle Peter wrote, “Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” or trials. Not only do we have manifold trials, but we get into heaviness through them. It does happen to many of the best of God’s servants that they have their sorrow and grief. Just lately I have seen several persons who, I am persuaded, love the Lord and the Lord

loves them—they are very precious to Him—humble, gentle, gracious people, but they have come into deep trouble, or some heavy cloud rests upon them. It is to them, especially, that I am now speaking.

Dear troubled Friend, you may have *a grief or sorrow that is not known to anybody but yourself*. You would not like to reveal it to anyone, you would not whisper it in the ear of the dearest confidant that you have on earth. You keep it to yourself and, perhaps, that is the very reason why it becomes so bitter to you. The communicating of it to some Christian friend might be a real help to you. You know what a relief it is to be able to shed tears when you are in great anguish. If you can have a good cry, you can get over the trouble more easily, but, sometimes, you cannot find expression for the grief and so the pent-up flame becomes more fierce than otherwise it would have been.

Well, there are children of God of that sort, just like Hannah, the woman of a sorrowful spirit, whose adversary sorely vexed her to make her fret. And even when she went up to the House of the Lord, it was in bitterness of soul that she stood there and prayed unto the Most High. I do not think that she could have told anybody, except possibly her husband, what the great grief of her heart was and, dear Friend, if you have a grief that you cannot tell to any human being, let my text affectionately invite you to look toward Jesus, the Temple of this dispensation, and tell the Lord all about your sorrow and ask Him to give you help, in this, your time of need.

It may be that *your trouble, though it is known to others, is misunderstood*. It is a very grievous thing when the affliction of God's people is misread, misinterpreted and others say, "Oh, nonsense! There is nothing to it!" Or else they say, "You are only making a rod for your own back. You might help yourself, if you liked, and get out of that sad state of mind." You know how the exhortation to "make an effort" is often given when all possibility of effort from within has long since passed away! And it is a very grievous thing when those whom we love utterly misunderstand us. They seem to read our words backwards. So far from having any sympathy with us, they are not able to enter into our secret sorrow. Alas for the child of God who is in that sad condition! But if you are thus troubled—if you know the plague of your own heart, but nobody else knows why you are so plagued—if you feel your own burden, but nobody else can see it, go to Jesus and tell *Him* of your inward grief. Open the door of your heart and let Him inspect all your being and ask Him for the gracious forgiveness which is the sweetest balm for your wounds. And then pray for a visitation of His blessed Spirit as the Comforter, that your heart may rejoice and be glad in Him.

Possibly, dear Friend, I may be speaking to you who have a grief which is not only unknown, or if known, is misunderstood, but to you who are *lonesome in your sorrow*. As far as you can tell, nobody ever before went the way which you are now treading. When I have preached, sometimes, to the despondent and the despairing, I have been thankful when, afterwards, persons have come to me and said that my sermon was the first ray of comfort they had ever received. I therefore try to practice Mr. Wesley's plan of firing low. He meant by it, speaking plainly, so as to hit

the groundlings, but while I endorse that view of the expression, I mean also another—not to shoot high where only some soaring professors may be, but to fire low, where the poor and needy are lying on their faces before God! I want to preach so that those who are ready to perish may come to Christ and that those who never before had a hope may begin to hope in Him. My dear Friend, if you are the only one who ever traveled along that rough road, and if you even think that you have no equal in your misery, but sit alone in your sorrow, yet are you bid to turn your face towards Christ, your Temple, and whatever may be your case, to tell it all to Him. And as Jesus lives, He will hear and answer you, and you shall yet go your way in peace!

I do not know what may be the peculiarities of your case. “The heart knows his own bitterness and a stranger does not intermeddle with his joy.” There are depths and there are heights where we must be alone. There are some griefs that we must keep to ourselves, as there are some raptures and experiences of which, if we were to tell them, men would say that we were fanatical and suspect that we were out of our mind! Do not be surprised, therefore, if you have sometimes to sail alone, so far as any human beings are concerned. If Christ is in the vessel with you, you cannot need any better company.

This grief of yours, my dear Friend, *may be connected with some sin*, or if not actually so, you may think it is. You may have lost the Light of God’s Countenance by some omission, or by walking at a distance from Him. It may be that you have been negligent in prayer. Or, possibly, there may have been some sin of commission—perhaps you have yielded to temptation and, therefore, it is that you are made to walk in the dark. Well, if it is so, do not let even that sad state prevent your coming to Jesus with your burden, for He has not only come to help us in our troubles, but to save us from our sins! “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins.” Do not, therefore, think that when you have sinned, you are shut out from the Savior. No, but there is “a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness”—open on purpose to cleanse them from sin and impurity!

Paul wrote to the Galatians that our Lord Jesus Christ “gave Himself for our sins,” upon which passage, Martin Luther observes that Christ never gave Himself for our righteousness! There was never enough of that to be worth His doing so, but He gave Himself for our sins, that He might put them away from us forever. Come, then, though a sense of guilt should put a sting into your sorrow which otherwise it would not possess. And though you may truly say, “I brought all this misery upon myself, I know I did. I played the fool, exceedingly, and now the mischief is done and cannot be undone,” yet remember that there is One who can lift the load off your spirit and say to you, “Go in peace! Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.” Look toward the Temple, even to Christ in whom God dwells, and from whom God shines! Tell Him your grief and you shall yet rejoice in the peace which He delights to bestow.

“Ah,” says one, “I am glad to hear this good news, for the sake of others, but *my* case is a peculiarly trying one, for I have been in this sad

state of mind for many years.” Yes, and how long was that daughter of Abraham bowed down so that she could by no means lift up herself? Was it not 18 years? Yet how long did it take Christ to make her upright? Why, not a moment! He spoke and she became straight at once, and able to walk like other women! You remember, also, that the impotent man had been waiting at the pool of Bethesda 38 years and the “high Doctrine” folk of that day told him to keep on waiting at the pool. But when Jesus Christ came round that way, *He* did not tell him to wait a minute, but He said, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” And he did so in an instant!

You, poor troubled Soul, need not continue to lie at the pool! You need not wait there a single moment more! Trust in Christ, who comes to you in all your inability, in all your sinfulness, in all your depression of spirit, in all your despair and who says to you, “Live. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” These are glorious Words of Grace! May the Lord speak them home to your heart even now! The devil himself cannot hold a man in captivity when once Christ gives him liberty! Though his feet are made fast in the stocks, and it is the dead hour of midnight, yet shall he begin to sing praises unto God! And his fellow prisoners shall hear him when Jesus of Nazareth passes by and gives him the gracious Word which makes him free! Christ crucified is your only hope! Therefore, turn your eyes to Him. By faith, look to those dear wounds of His. From your inmost soul, breathe your penitent prayer to Him and He will grant you the desire of your heart, even life forevermore!

II. Secondly, IF WE HAVE A GRIEF OR SORROW, IT IS WELL TO KNOW IT, for Solomon here speaks “of any man, or of all Your people Israel, when everyone shall know his own burden and his own grief.”

In visiting the sick, lately, I have been struck with the different ways in which the children of men are afflicted. There is one of our Beloved Brothers who is covered with blisters from head to foot. Another is lying in a critical condition through congestion of the lungs. There is another gradually melting away with consumption, while cancer is eating out the very life of yet another friend. Now, just as it is with the pangs of the body, so is it with the diseases of the mind and the soul. They are of various kinds and though they may be arranged under different heads, there is no one spiritual burden or sorrow exactly like another and, therefore, it is well for every man to know his own burden and his own grief. My faults are not exactly the same as yours and yours, probably, are not quite like mine. That which greatly grieves me might never trouble you if you had it, while that which worries and troubles you might be a thing which I could laugh at if it came to me. We must never judge one another, nor may we wish to have other people’s sorrows and griefs, but we must try, as far as we can, to know, every man, his own burden and his own grief.

For, first, *sometimes to know your grief, is to get rid of it.* It is the unknown that is often the most terrible. Belshazzar, when his knees knocked together, was frightened because he saw the part of the hand that wrote upon the wall, but he did not see the form of the writer, nor could he tell what was written. It was the mystery of the thing that troubled him and, sometimes, when you do not know what your trouble is, it is more of a trial to you than when you can get it into a definite shape. It is a grand thing to be able to look at it, to measure it, to take stock of it, to write down, in black and white, what it is that is worrying you. If you do that, you will probably say to yourself, "How foolish I am to let this be a trouble to me at all!" And sometimes, on the other hand, you will find yourself foolish in another sense. After Christian and Hopeful had been shut up in the dungeon in Giant Despair's Castle for several days and nights, Christian said to his companion, "What a fool I am, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." We may find ourselves saying just the same thing! We shall look at our trouble till we shall exclaim, "Why, blessed be God, there is a promise in His Word which exactly meets this difficulty! God the Holy Spirit has left on record the message that is just adapted to this very trial! Therefore, why do I lie moaning and groaning in this dungeon, when I might at once walk out into Gospel liberty?" So I say to you, Beloved, seek to know what your burden or your grief really is, for it is the unknown that is usually filled with terrors.

It is, too, *the undiscovered, often, that is the most dangerous.* As I have already said, our sorrows are oftentimes connected with our sins. It is a terrible thing to have a sin festering in your soul and to not know it. If a man tells me that he has no sin, I ask him to look within, or even to look without upon his own life. But if he thinks that he is perfect there, let him keep on looking within. And if he does not discover something evil there, it must be because an awful blindness has fallen upon him! Often there is sin connected with our trouble—and it is most important for us to see it and to know it. I think that it was St. Francis de Sales who said that, among all those who came to him confessing their sins, not one ever confessed to being covetous. And it is a curious thing that, as a rule, no covetous man ever believes that he is covetous. Covetousness is a most deceitful thing! Pray God to point it out to you if it is within your heart, lest it should destroy you! A man may be in such a state of soul that the scarlet fever of pride may be killing him and yet, all the while, he may be thinking, "What a humble person I am!" For pride is another of the most deceptive sins. Every man should try to know what his own weakness is. Perhaps the very point in which you think you are the strongest is that in which you are really weakest. And the thing which does not trouble you in the least may, after all, be that which ought to cause the greatest searching of heart. Do pray the Lord, each one of you, to cause you to know your own burden and your own grief.

Remember that if there is sin mixed with our sorrow, *it ought not only to be known, but to be so known as to be confessed.* Oh, what an easement to the soul it is when you can confess your sin to the Lord! I would

have you do it distinctly in the most plain words possible. Do not attempt to cloak the matter before God, for you cannot hide anything from Him. Remember how David, at last, prayed God to deliver him from blood-guiltiness. He was on the right road to getting rest in his soul when he could confess his great crime like that! I have heard of one who was a child of God, but he was grievously overtaken when, in company, he drank too much. He could not get any peace of mind for months until he said, "Lord, I was drunk." And after he had put it in that way, he found forgiveness, peace and rest. No doubt, before that, he had said, "I am afraid I was a little imprudent," or used some of those pretty phrases which people employ as a cloak for their wrong-doing when they will not confess the evil in all its nakedness and deformity. Away with the fig leaves! God abhors them! It is *He* who must clothe you! And He will do so with the righteousness of His Son. But, if He is to accept you, there must be no attempt to lighten your guilt. Let sin be called sin and, in the Presence of Christ—

"Sin does like itself appear,"

and the sinner sees its heinousness and learns to hate it. So, then, each man must know his own burden, his own grief and especially his own sin—that he may confess it unto God.

What does all this come to, then, dear Brother, dear Sister? You have, perhaps, been coming to see me, or to see one of the elders, about your trouble. We cannot help you much, though we will gladly do what we can for you. But, now, try to make it clear to your own mind what all the trouble is about—get it down in black and white if you can—and then come with it to the Lord. Often there is far too much indistinctness in our prayers. We really do not know what we are aiming at and, consequently, we miss the mark. We have not a clear idea what it is that we are seeking of the Lord and, therefore, we do not get it. But if we really know our grief and know our burden, and know our sin, and know the plague of our own heart—and then go before the Lord with it all, and say, "That is my trouble, Lord. I confess it before You with a broken heart and a contrite spirit," it will not be long before the Lord, in mercy, shall give us peace.

III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, while it is well to know our grief, IT IS BETTER, STILL, TO PRAY ABOUT IT. I have been hammering away at this Truth of God, but now I want to give a few blows right upon the head of the nail.

Dear troubled Friend, *there is no relief for you like prayer.* And if you are almost in despair, permit me to put the matter to you very gently. I will try to push in the thin end of the wedge first. Perhaps, if you go to God, and pray about your trouble, you will get deliverance from it. I say, perhaps. Put it so, to begin with. You cannot lose anything, can you, by praying to God? Suppose you go to the Lord with your grief—you cannot be any worse off than you already are, can you? You are now in such a sad condition, so much bowed down that if you confess your sin and your sorrow at His dear feet, and leave them there, you cannot be in a sadder plight than you are now, can you? Well, then, say, with the poet—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,

***Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch
And then the suppliant lives!
Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer—
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.”***

It may be that the Lord will deliver you. There is many a man who has gone to God on the strength of a, “may be,” and yet that, “may be,” has been enough to land him in Heaven at last! You remember how the whole of the people of Nineveh had nothing to rely upon except that question of their king, “Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” That was a very tiny thread, “Who can tell?” But, relying on it, they went and humbled themselves before God—and we know what followed—“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways. And God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not.” Sister, I would like to whisper that question in your ear, “Who can tell?” Brother, I would like to take your hand and say to you, “Come now, do not despair. Who can tell? It may be that the Lord will be also gracious to you. Go and cast yourself at His feet and determine to lie there, and to perish there, if you must perish. But you shall not perish if you go to Him.”

Remember, again, that *there is One who is quite ready to give you a full hearing, whatever your trouble and your sin may be*, for the Lord Jesus Christ already knows all about your trouble—

***“Our fellow Sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, and agonies, and cries.
In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part.
He sympathizes in our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.”***

If you come to me, I shall try to sympathize with you as fully as I can. But, perhaps, I shall fail, for you may be so deep in the bog that I may never have gone quite as low down as that. But if you go to the Lord Jesus Christ, you can never be as deep in sorrow as He was when His agony forced from Him great drops of blood and His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” And, as for your sin, black as it is, it is not too black for Him to remove! Bring out the sin that is more than a match for Christ, if you can. Remember His great declaration, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Oh, it is you, poor woman, is it? Are you like the one of whom we were reading just now? Do you feel yourself as great a sinner as she was, or are you actually a woman of the very vilest class? And are your accusers near, who, if you were to deny your guilt, would stand up and witness against you? Jesus says to you, “Go, and sin no more.” O poor sinful Soul, go to Jesus even if you have all the sins that are unmentionable piled upon you! And if you are a man

who has committed as much sin as all the rest of the world put together, yet come along! My Lord, who bore upon His shoulders the sin of the world, is fully able to put your sin away—

***“If all the sins that men have done
In thought, or word, or deed
Since worlds were made, or time began,
Were heaped on one poor sinner’s head,”***

yet could the blood of Jesus Christ blot them all out in a single moment, so that though they were sought for, they should never be found again! Oh, that you would but come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ!

“Ah,” says one, “that is just my difficulty—I cannot trust Him.” If you talk like that, you and I will fall out directly! If you tell me that you cannot trust my father, I shall say, “My father is a man of truth and honor. He pays his debts and he never lies! And I will not have you say, ‘I cannot trust him.’” But whatever you call my father, I shall not be half so indignant as when you tell me that you cannot trust my Savior! When did He lie, pray tell? When was He ever false? When did He ever fail? You say you cannot trust Him? Why, I feel that if I had all your souls in one, I could trust Him with the whole of them! Yes, if I could get into this body of mine all the souls that God ever made, I would trust Him with the whole bulk, for I am persuaded that He was never trusted too much! You could never believe of Christ a thing so good that it was not true! Suppose that you believe that He can forgive you—He will do it! He will never let your belief go beyond what He will do. If you believe that He will wash you so that you shall be whiter than snow, He will do it! Faith and Christ often run a race, but Christ always wins, for, if faith flies like the wind, Christ flashes like the lightning and He outstrips it. You cannot possibly believe too good a thing of Him. Just try, now, whether you can do so! Should not that Truth of God tend to cheer you, poor downcast one?

The best thing that you can do is to remember that there is an open door to every soul who lives. Then, draw near to God. There is no barrier in the way and there is a blessed text, at the end of this Book, which says, “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” I saw a man once, in a court of justice, who was called up to the witness box, but he could not press through the crowd. So the judge spoke to the usher, and the usher said to the people, “Let him come! Let him come! Let him come!” And after he had said that, there began to be a little narrow lane made for him, and so he squeezed his way up. Now there is a poor sinner over there, and there are a thousand devils between him and Christ! But when Christ says to them, “Let him come! Let him come! Let him come!” They must make a lane for him. When our Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth, on the great day of the feast, He stood and cried, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink.” Who will say to Him, “Lord, I am that man! I am thirsty and You say, ‘Let him come’”? If you say that, who is there to stop you from going to Him? Why, if the arch-fiend should set himself right in your way, yet if Jesus Christ says, “Let him come,” you shall come!

Did not He say, long ago, “Let there be light”? and the primeval darkness, which had lasted throughout many an age, was gone in an instant! So, if the Lord says, “Let him come,” then all that oppose you and try to

keep you back must be overthrown, for you shall come! Trust Jesus, dear Friend! Trust in the name of the Lord of love and mercy, who is looking upon you, a poor, bruised, broken, manacled mass of misery. I beseech you, turn your eyes towards Christ. O you poor smoking flax, if you have not anything about you but smoke, and that smoke is not very sweet, yet Jesus Christ says that He will not quench you! O you poor bruised reed, out of which there can come no music as you are, I tell you that He will yet get music out of you! Only look to Him, poor troubled one, for He knows how to bind up the broken in heart, and to heal their wounds and, thereby, to glorify Himself. Oh, for another prayer, even though it were your last! Do breathe it. I know that Satan will try hard to stop you. He will say, "It is no use! You have been praying for months! You have been praying for years!" Yes, but, this time pray as you never prayed before! Perhaps you have been lifting up your eyes to a priest, or to a man, or to a Doctrine, or to a creed—now just look right away to Jesus Christ! That is the way that prayer was heard in the olden days, when they looked toward the Temple! And your prayer shall be heard when you look to the Savior! "Oh, but just look at me!" you say. No, I do not want to look at you! I want you to look to Christ. "Oh, but, Sir, I am dreadfully wicked! I confess it with shame." Yes, and you are probably a hundred times worse than you think you are! You are a good-for-nothing sort of person. You are an out-of-the-way sinner, but that is the very reason why I want you to believe in Him "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

I want you to look to Him who came to earth on purpose that He might wash these Blackamoors white, and take the spots out of these leopards, and make them to become like lambs! My Lord did not come into the world to be a doctor who only cures finger-aches and small complaints! He came to cleanse the lepers, to cast out demons, to raise the dead—even Lazarus, who had begun to putrefy! Oh, He is such a glorious Savior that I cannot speak His praises loudly enough, though speaking of Him warms my own heart! My voice was hoarse when I began my sermon and I thought I could hardly get through the discourse, but, with such a theme as this, I forget all weakness and pain! Yes, raise me even when I am dying, that I may sit up in bed and begin to praise Him! There never was a sinner half as big as Christ is a Savior! Come and measure the sinner, if you like, from head to foot, and all round. Make him out to be an elephantine sinner, yet there is room for him in the Ark, Christ Jesus! There is room in the heart of Jesus for the vilest of the vile! Oh, that you would turn your eyes to Him and pray to Him from your very heart and trust in Him with your whole soul!

I finish up by saying that *those who do this shall find rest unto their souls*. Solomon's petition was that they should be forgiven. "Then hear You from Heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive." Yes, and everything else that a sinner needs is ready for him when he comes to Christ. I do not know—I cannot tell—all that you need, but I do know that all you ever can need between here and Heaven is laid up for you in Christ Jesus! I have used this illustration before. Here is a poor little babe that we have picked up in the streets. What shall we do with it? What does this

child need? Well, it needs washing—look how filthy it is, for it has been lying in the gutter. It needs food, poor little creature—look how emaciated it is. It needs proper clothes—look at its rags. I would have to keep on a long time and you mothers who are listening to me might say, “He does not know much about what the babe needs.” But I will show you that I do, because in one single sentence I will tell you what that child needs! *It needs its MOTHER!* And when it gets its mother, it has got everything. When its mother finds it, then it is provided for! And what you need, dear Soul, is pardon, cleansing, clothing, training, sanctifying—but I will not go over it all. *What you need is your SAVIOR!* You need Jesus and if you get Jesus, you never shall have a need that is outside of Christ! You shall never have a necessity that is not comprised within the matchless circle of His unspeakable all-sufficiency! Oh, take Christ to your heart and your fortune is made! You have all you need for time and for eternity, when once the Lord Jesus Christ is yours! Oh, that you would make a dash for this great blessing!

“I am afraid to come,” says one. Well come all trembling and fearing—only come. “But I am afraid I shall be cast out if I come.” Oh, but you must not indulge that fear, for He has said, “He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “But suppose I should not happen to be one of the right sort?” Come all the same, whether you are or not, for Christ will not cast you out if you do but come to Him! When a man is very hungry, if he takes bread that is not his own and eats it, no one will ever take it away from him, for he has it too securely. So, if you come and take the Lord Jesus Christ into your very soul, there is no one who can take Him away from you! “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!” And he that really feeds upon Him has so received Him that he shall never lose Him. Oh, that all who are strangers to Him might do so even now. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 7:53; 8:1-11.**

John 7:53; John 8:1: *And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.* That is, as every man went to his own house to rest, so Jesus found rest in secret prayer on the Mount of Olives. There is a very striking contrast here. It is a pity to have brought the dividing saw right through the middle of such charming consecutive sentences.

2. *And early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them.* That is always the posture in the East—the teachers sit, and the hearers stand. We may have to try that plan one of these days—it might be better for me and, also, for you! There might be less drowsiness, perhaps, if the congregation had to stand to listen to the preacher’s message.

3, 4. *And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.* They did this only to entangle the Savior—not because they wanted to learn anything

of Him, or to do this woman any good, or even to vindicate morality. It was simply an effort to entrap Him.

5, 6. *Now Moses in the Law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what say You? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him.* They could accuse Him either way. If He sanctioned their stoning the woman, they would charge Him with violating the Roman law. But if He said that she should not be stoned, then they would say that He differed from Moses and set aside the Law of God.

6, 7. *But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.* That sentence must have flashed like a drawn sword, keen as a razor, through the very midst of them! Here were men who had probably been living in abominable sin, yet they had brought this poor sinful woman to Jesus and laid this accusation against her.

8. *And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground.* After He had fired that one red-hot shot, He waited until it had produced its due effect.

9. *And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out, one by one, beginning with the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.* They left her alone with Jesus in the midst of the place that the guilty crowd had forsaken in silent shame.

10, 11. *When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those, your accusers? Has no man condemned you? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more.* He condemned the sin—His own pure and holy life was the best condemnation of that. But, as for the sinner, He had not come to condemn, but to forgive. His own declaration was, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 978, 981.

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TEMPLE GLORIES

NO. 375

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 31, 1861,
DELIVERED BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endures forever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God”
2 Chronicles 5:13, 14.

“Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from Heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good. For His mercy endures forever.”
2 Chronicles 7:1, 2, 3.

IN the wilderness God showed His glorious presence in the midst of the camp of Israel. To show His secret indwelling in His Church—in the innermost chamber of the sacred tent there perpetually beamed the bright and ineffable light of the Shekinah and to manifest His visible presence to protect and guide His flock, a pillar of cloud covered the people by day, screening them from the burning heat of the sun, so that in that extremely hot and terrible region they were delivered from excessive heat. And at night lest they should feel forsaken in the midst of the desolate darkness of the desert, this pillar of cloud became a pillar of fire.

There was light throughout all their dwellings, for I suppose that this pillar of fire like a luminous atmosphere covered the entire camp. They had thus a sun and a shield. They had light in darkness and salvation from the heat—their shelter was God’s wing, their light gleamed from His eye. Now the thought had fallen into the heart of David to build for God a house instead of the tent in which He was willing to dwell, which, by reason of years, had no doubt grown old and somewhat shorn of its glories. He purposed to build a permanent structure.

Solomon, his son, carried out the purpose of David. The temple was built. We have no precise idea of the architecture and appearance of this

glorious edifice. The two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, are thought by some to have been vast castings of brass, set up in front rather for ornament than service, like the enormous obelisks in the gateways of the Egyptian temples. Others conceive that these renowned columns supported the entablature of the portico. In either case they were stupendous in size and beautified in the most elaborate manner. The building itself was not large, but exceedingly magnificent.

We make a great mistake when we think of Solomon's temple as being famous for size. It was scarcely half as long and barely half as wide as this present house, or that the area was not one fourth of this which is now crowded with immortal souls. It was sixty cubits long in the center and using the most liberal calculation which can be given the cubit it measured but one hundred feet. If the cubit be half-a-yard, the breadth was but ninety feet. There are hundreds of Christian Churches which excel that marvelous building in mere size. Its chief fame lay in the countless treasures lavished upon it. One of the most reasonable calculations of the expense of that gorgeous structure is one hundred and twenty million pounds, while other estimates arrive at the inconceivable sum of one thousand millions.

The wonder is how they could have used such an amount as even the smaller sum. Whatever it might have been, it would have been a vain-glorious work, unless in that temple there had been the same manifestation of the Divine presence as had been given in the tabernacle. Now these were two, *the cloud* and *the fire*. The two passages of Scripture which I have read to you give you two pictures. In the first you have the cloud, in the second you have the fire. And in these two together you have the sacred mystic symbols of the presence of the Eternal God in the midst of His people. Oh, that now, tonight, though no visible cloud shall be seen, though no fire shall burn the bullock and the ram, yet may faith discern *the cloud* and may experience in the heart perceive *the fire* and may each of us say, "God was with us of a Truth." And add, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He spoke with us by the way?"

I. The first passage of Scripture, which I read in your hearing, affords me the first head of my discourse. You will perceive that the people were gathered together to praise God. Then THE CLOUD appeared, the priests were no longer able to minister, for God had claimed the great house as being exclusively His own.

Let us note the *occupation* in which they were engaged. They were praising God. Let us mark how they performed this work. You will perceive, that they did it *unanimously*. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord." What a joyous thing it is to hear the thousands praise God at once—every man contributing to the song—the poor coarse voice belonging to some of us who never can learn music, let us try as much as we will. The flute-like voices of our sisters, the deep resounding mellow bass of the full-developed man.

All the different tones and notes and voices, perhaps expressive of our different degrees and growths in grace, of our different trials and our different temperaments—all join to swell one common hymn which rolls upward to the Throne of God. Every man who refuses to praise God mars the song. Every dumb lip spoils the music. Every silent tongue has a disas-

trous effect upon the unanimity and oneness of the choir. Let us *all* praise the Lord! Let all creatures that have breath praise Him. Let the Heaven of heavens extol Him. We can never expect to have God in this house, or in our own houses, or in our own hearts until we begin to praise Him. Unless as a people we unanimously, with one heart, though with many tongues, extol the King of kings, farewell to the hope that He will give us His presence in the future.

Oh, my dear Brethren, let us look back upon the past! Who among us is not a debtor to mercy? "Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God," and never tasted of His grace, be silent. Be silent, O tongue, if you have never tasted of the goodness of the Lord. Breath, be wasted on the air if your mouth has never been satisfied with good things. But, my Soul, if your life is His gift and your joy His mercy, let no wicked silence bury His praise. He has been so good, so kind, so generous to everyone of us without exception that we can and must each one of us, according to our ability, with heart and voice, praise, laud and bless His name always.

But then you perceive they not only sang unanimously, but they shouted *heartily*. In some of our churches, there are half-a-dozen people dressed in white, who stand up to praise the Lord or rather to magnify the music leader. In many of our dissenting congregations, some five or six who are the choir, sing to the praise and glory of themselves and the people sit still and listen, not daring to spoil music so magnificent. In many other places, it is thought most seemly to delegate the work of human hearts and tongues and lips to some instrument which shall praise the Lord. May that never be the case here.

As often as we meet together here may the song roll up to Heaven like the voice of many waters and like great thunders. A little God might deserve little praise, but the Great God deserves the great praise of all His creatures. I have noticed that in business many men show a great deal of energy. But in singing God's praises they are almost as mute as Matthew's fish. They can listen to the notes, but they do not attempt to join. They have no objection that others should sing, but they are mute themselves. Oh, let us sing to our God! And heartily, too! And if the voice is not so well tuned as we could wish, yet if the *heart* be in tune, God will accept the song and even angel notes shall not be more acceptable.

Fathers love to hear the voices of their own children—why should our heavenly Father have a dumb family? Mr. Rowland Hill was one day in the pulpit and an old woman among the crowd got right up to the pulpit steps. She had the art of singing through her nose and she sung so desperately bad, that good old Rowland turned round and said to her—"Hold your tongue, my good woman, you spoil the singing." "Oh, Sir!" she said, "it comes from my heart, Mr. Hill. It comes from my heart." "Sing away, good soul," said he, "sing away as much as ever you like. I am sure I beg your pardon for interrupting you."

And so would I say to every man who, in God's house, cannot sing as he would—if it comes from the *heart* we could not interrupt you—for the very stones would speak if they who fear God and have tasted of His grace did not exalt and extol Him. But if you will not praise God in earnest, you must not expect to see *the cloud* of His presence. Remember it was when with one *heart*—with a mighty sound they praised God that the cloud suddenly made its appearance.

Then notice next, that their praise was *Scriptural praise*. They sung that old Psalm, "His mercy endures forever." Now you, I dare say, thought when I was reading that Psalm there was not much in it. It was a repetition—a monotony. It was striking the same note again and again—ringing the same bell. Well, this just shows that God does not require in our song the display of great poetical ability. He does not need that the verses should have in them flights of rhapsody or dreams of fancy. Let the rhyme be good by all means. Let the syllables each of them have their proper length. God always should have the best of the best. But better is the wild song of the revivalist with the homely street tune, sung from the very soul than the noblest music that was ever penned, or ever cowed from human lips, if the heart is absent and if the strain is not in accordance with God's Word.

The more Scriptural our hymns are the better. In fact there will never be found music which can excel old David's Psalms. Let us interpret them in an evangelical spirit, let us fill them full of the Gospel of Christ, of which they are, indeed, already full in prophecy and we shall sing the very words of the Spirit and shall surely edify each other and glorify our God. If tonight, then, our music has been Scriptural, if our praise has been hefty, if our song has been unanimous, if we have sung of that mercy which endures forever, we have good cause to expect that God will manifest Himself to us and faith will perceive the cloud.

That is a grand old Calvinistic Psalm, "*His mercy endures forever.*" What Arminian can sing that? Well, he *will* sing it, I dare say. But if he is a thorough-going Arminian he really cannot enjoy it and believe it. You can fall from grace, can you? Then how does His mercy endure forever? Christ bought with His blood some that will be lost in Hell, did He? Then how did His mercy endure forever? There are some who resist the offers of Divine grace and after all that the Spirit of God can do for them, yet disappoint the Spirit and defeat God!? How, then, does His mercy endure forever? No, no, this is no hymn for you, this is the Calvinist's hymn. This is the hymn which you and I will sing as long as life shall last and going through the dark valley of the shadow of death we will make the shades resound with the joyous strain—

***"For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."***

It was while the people were thus engaged that on a sudden that cloud which before floated over the tabernacle made its appearance over the temple. But this time, instead of hanging over the roof, it descended and entered into the courts and filled the sacred places. The priests were standing, each of them, in his proper place, swinging to and fro the sacred censers and making a sweet perfume. Others of them were standing at the altar waiting till the time should come for sacrifice. But no sooner did this cloud fill the house than the priests ceased to minister. They felt there was no room for man, for God had filled the place.

Brethren, will you give me your attention while I try to picture to you what shall be the effect if God shall be pleased to fill this house with His glory? I can conceive the effect upon that vast assembly on that august day of the dedication. The glory of God had filled the house and *the priests were set aside*. Where God is, man is forgotten. You will think little of the minister save for his work's sake—you will talk the less of the man when

you shall see the Master. This house shall cease to be called by my name and shall be called by God's name. If God shall fill the place, it will be to your souls not the house where you can sit to hear this man or that, but the place where you shall see the beauty of God and enquire in His temple.

You will love your pastor. You will cherish your elders. You will rally round your deacons. You will, as a Church, recognize the bonds of your Church-relationship—but pastor, elders, deacons, Church—all will be merged and all forgotten if the glory of the Lord shall fill the house. This has been the effect always of great revivals—no man has ever been very apparent. When God blessed the world through Whitfield and Wesley, who were they and what thought they of themselves? “Less than nothing they became when God was All in All.” The up-going of priests is the dishonor of the High Priest Christ Jesus—but when priestcraft ceases to be and is cast down—then the Lord alone is exalted in that day.

May the Lord here, while He uses human instrumentality, let you all see that “it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord.” This has indeed been my mission, to show the power of God in human weakness. I do acknowledge and confess what is so continually said of me, “The man is not educated”—*Granted*. “His periods are unpolished”—*Granted*. “His manner is rough”—*Be it so, if you will*. “Himself a fool”—*Yes, amen and whatever else you choose*. Gather together all the epithets in the catalogue of abuse—come heap them here. But who has done *this*, who has saved souls and called the people to His footstool? Why, if the instrument is mean, the more glory be to Him that used it!

And if the man is nothing, “I glory in infirmity, that the power of God may rest upon me.” Make me less and less. I pray you do it. Let it be so. But still, O God, use this poor ox-goad, make it still mighty to the slaying of Philistines and make Your Word still a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let the Lord fill the house and man will be forgotten.

Besides this, you can easily picture in your minds what *a solemn awe fell on all who were gathered that day* when once that cloud had filled the house. Perhaps there were in that vast assembly some who came there flippantly, to see the edifice. There were some who had heard of its plates of gold. They had heard of its brazen laver, they had listened to the stories of the great stones which Hiram, king of Tyre, had floated on rafts to Joppa and they came to see the place. There were others, too, who had contributed largely to the erection. They came to be seen—that the king might thank them for the gift—that the people might see their generous benefactors.

These motives, we admit were base, but the motives were lost and forgotten when once the glory of God filled the house. Then they felt the place was too solemn to be looked at as a mere display. They thought it, then too awful to be regarded as their own and on the breast of every Israelite might have been read these words, “This is none other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven,” for God had filled the house.

Then, too, you may believe right well that *the saints of God rejoiced*. They had sung before. The prayers made sweet melody. But oh, what music was in their souls when once that cloud had covered all! Methinks they wept for joy. They could not speak. I know I should have been transfixed to that spot. I would have said—

“Come, then, expressive silence; hymn His praise,”

for oh, when God is present how can we tell our joys! Sing unto Him, sing unto Him. Praise Him on the cymbals, praise Him on the high-sounding cymbals. But when you have done, all your joy overflows your words—the music of your hearts excels the music of your lips.

And then, I think I may add safely enough, *the suppliants* of that day *felt they might pray more earnestly* because they prayed surely. God had filled the house—now He would hear their prayers. Whenever they turned their eye to the temple they would meet the eye of God. When for deliverance from sin, pestilence, war, drought, mildew, locusts, or caterpillars they turned their eye towards Zion’s hill—they felt they must be heard, for God had filled the house. Oh, that tonight the people of God may be glad!

Oh, that you may go home as they did from Solomon’s temple, blessing the king, each man, in the gladness of heart and feeling that you may pray for God *will* hear! That God has so manifestly owned this house as His that whensver we shall meet for supplication, though we be but two or three—where prayer is desired to be made—there Christ is in the midst of us to bless us. I ask, my Brethren, that we may have such a manifestation of God that all these effects, in the very highest and fullest degree, may be received and participated in by us.

I have thus preached upon my first text as briefly as I could, leaving the more time to enforce the lesson of the second. You have sung His praise. Now, Lord, fill the house. You have chanted His name, you have lifted up your voices to Him whose mercy endures forever. Oh, King of kings shine forth! Oh, You that dwells between the cherubim, display Yourself to each of us and do it now, for Jesus’ sake!

II. The first text has had reference to the *past*. For mercies received we must praise God if we would be favored with His presence. The next text dwells specially upon the *future*. The people after praise joined with one another in solemn prayer and sacrifice—then was it that THE FIRE came down. They had the cloud before, but now they had the fire and then once again they stood up, after having bowed themselves and they worshipped the Lord and sang once again, “His mercy endures forever.”

I have said in this place five or six times already, that unless my Church shall pray for me and God shall hear their prayers, I am of all men the most miserable. But if your supplications shall be heard in Heaven I am of all men the most blessed by God. Think of this assembly, repeated as it will be Sabbath after Sabbath—what if we should have no food for the saint—what if the Word should never be spoken earnestly to sinners and should therefore be unblest? It will be in vain that this house is filled! In vain did I say? Infinitely worse than that! Will it be nothing that we are associated together in Church-fellowship. Nothing!

It will be everything that shall foretell our future misery unless God is here. In vain the rearing of this structure with all the perseverance that has been used and with all the smiles of God, unless we have His blessing *now*. If ever you prayed for me and for this Church before, pray for us seven times now. Oh, you that are my sons and daughters spiritually—who have been born to God by the preaching of the Word—to you I make my first appeal. I beseech you never cease to pray that here God’s Word may be a quickening, a convincing, a converting Word. The fact is, Brethren, we must have conversion work here. We cannot go on as some

Churches do without converts. We cannot, we will not, we must not, we dare not.

Souls must be converted here and if there are not many born to Christ, may the Lord grant to me that I may sleep in the tomb of my fathers and be heard of no more. Better indeed for us to die than to live if souls are not saved. You, then, who have already been saved under our ministry, make this, I pray you, a matter of daily prayer. You who are members of this Church, who have been long ago in Christ, before our time—I charge you by Him that lives and was dead, be instant in season and out of season with your constant supplications. O Sirs! What shall I do if I have the misfortune to lose my prayer book? And *you* are my prayer book—my litany, my daily collects are all written on my people’s hearts.

Where am I? Like a poor shipwrecked man floating far out at sea upon a raft with no friendly sail in sight, unless I have your daily prayers. But if I have them, I shall be as some well-laden ship floating in the midst of its convoy with many larger vessels and fairer sails which keep it gladsome company in storm and in fair weather, till we all shall reach our port together and at once. Pray for us that our faith fail not, that our pride break not forth. Pray for *us* that *we* may pray. Pray that we may read the Word with a greater understanding of it and that when we stand up to speak, a horn of the oil of the Spirit may anoint our head that we may speak the Words of God and not the words of man.

And with your prayers mingle your sacrifices. Bring each day, each one of you, the precious blood of Christ. Take in your hands handfuls of the frankincense of His merits. Stand each morning and each night before the Divine Throne as the king’s remembrances, putting Him in remembrance of what Jesus did. Plead with Him by *His* agony and bloody sweat, by *His* Cross and passion, by *His* precious death and burial. Plead with Him to save souls. Use the strong arguments of Jesus’ veins. Take to yourselves the Almighty logic of a bleeding Savior’s groans. Stand to it that you will not let the angel go except He bless you.

Back up your prayers with tears. Prove the sincerity of your tears by acts. Live out your prayers. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and then work and strive for it. As one man, with one heart, be you daily crying to your God and seeking by acts of faith to prove the reality of your supplication. And then, mark you—then shall *the fire* come down. We have, I trust, the cloud already. God this week has acknowledged this house to be His. We want the fire. “But what is the difference?” you say. Why, there may be the presence of God in a house after a certain fashion, inasmuch as His people there worship Him. But yet it may not be His *active* presence.

We want not the cloud—the *symbol* of only His being there in mystery—we *need* the *fire* which is the symbol of His acting while He is present. Oh, my Brethren, how much the *preacher* wants the fire! He that has the tongue of flame can soon melt hearts, but what are these poor pieces of clay unless God bid the seraph touch them with a live coal from the altar? Preaching is a farce unless the minister has fire within him. And when the fire is there, preaching is God’s ordained and guaranteed way of bringing souls to Himself.

You have heard preachers, I do not doubt, with an erudition so perfect that you could not fathom their meaning. You have heard them with an eloquence so exalted that you could not explain what it was that they

would set forth. You have listened to some who rather seemed to have lips of ice than lips of fire. You have heard of many who are successful in giving sleep to those who never sleep at home. There are some preachers who can distribute narcotics with a bounteous hand and send at one motion of their deadly arm a whole crowd to sleep. May it never be so here. If we cannot keep you awake it is better ourselves to go to sleep. When the congregation is asleep it is a sign the minister ought to be in bed—where he could be comfortable—rather than in a pulpit where he is mischievous.

But attention may be riveted without feeling being excited. We want *the fire* to make the feeling. Oh, I have heard a man preach a sermon to which an angel might have listened for its faultless truthfulness, but it lacked fire. And I have known another whose ministry was faulty in many respects, rough were his words, the Gospel which he preached was not a full-orbed Gospel, but yet he spoke like a man that meant what he said, with his heart boiling over at his eyes, with his soul rolling out of his mouth in one tremendous cataract and men were moved and the masses flocked and thousands listened and souls were saved because the man was in earnest.

Ah, when I see a man go up into his pulpit and ask the Lord the Holy Spirit to assist him and then opens wide his manuscript and reads it all—I wonder what he means? And when he prays that he may have the tongue of fire and then speaks in such a mumbling cold trivial manner that his hearers detect at once that there is no heart about him—I wonder what he means? Oh, fire of God, come down upon the tongue of the minister! But we need this fire upon the *hearers, too*. How will people listen when they come to hear something! When they come up and do not expect to get anything it is not often they are disappointed. But when they are willing to listen to whatever is to be said in God's name, how delightful, how easy, how pleasant it is to address them!

We need much of that kind of fire. Oh, how we want the ear that is circumcised—the heart that is softened! The minister is the sower. O God, plow the furrows first! The minister is the waterer. Great God, plant the cedar first! We are but the lights. Great God, give the eyes. We are but the trumpets. O Lord, open the ears. We do but speak—Great God, give life that when we speak we may not speak to dead men, but that life may be given through our word. Fire is abundantly wanted upon the hearers.

What a noble effect is produced when once the fire comes down upon a congregation! I will picture you a Church without fire and then one with it. There is a chapel—we will not say where—anywhere you like. On Sabbath morning the minister enters his place. He hardly expects to see it half full. He comes in about five minutes after time. He gives out the hymn—two or three singers rise up and slaughter the praise. The people keep dropping in all through the hymn. Prayer begins and they are dropping in still. The chapter has been read and the second hymn going on. They are coming in still. At last they have got quietly settled.

The clerk has just finished the last verse. He composes himself to his usual sleep. The congregation also prepare themselves for what they are about to receive. Firstly has produced its effect. Secondly is telling upon the people very manifestly. And by the time that thirdly has been given out, perhaps the last pair of eyes will have ceased to gaze upon the pulpit and the vacant face within it. But as you stand in the aisle, you say to

yourself, "Well, this is a sight indeed! That is a good man in the pulpit, but what right has he *there*? These are good people, but what do they come *here* for? There is no earnestness, no life."

The notices have to be given out—"Prayer meeting on Monday evening—lecture on Thursday." Well, we will come on Monday evening. So we go. There is the minister and about four people besides ourselves. There are hardly enough to ask to pray. After one has prayed, the minister will have to pray twice to make up the time. The prayers are twenty minutes long—they are not prayers, they are sermons. If anything, the prayer meeting is duller than the service, for there were people at the one, if no life. But here there are neither people nor life.

Well, we will go and speak presently to the deacons. "Well, friend, how has your Church increased of late?" "Well, Sir, we do not increase. We have not looked to that lately. But Sir, things are very well. We are going on very comfortably." "How long since you have had a baptizing?" "Oh, we had a baptizing in old Dr. So-and-So's time. That is about, I think—let me see—fifteen years ago, I think." "You have not had one since?" "Well, I do not know. We may have had one. We have had some members join from other Churches, but we certainly have not had many." "And are you doing anything in the neighborhood for good?" "Well, no. We have some young people that are a little too rash and hasty. They will not be quite quiet. But our minister does not think there is any use in going out of the old ways. Besides, he says revivals are all wildfire—that the Lord will certainly have His own and that we ought not to exert ourselves beyond the proper limit. You know he says that ministers who preach too often, always die prematurely. Our minister wants to live to a good old age and therefore he is careful of his valuable life."

We will go and see the minister now. We will ask him to let us into the study. Sets of manuscripts!—a bad sign. Shelves full of sermons and very little Puritan theology. Bad sign again. I wonder whether he will let us stop by while he is making a sermon? The way to begin to make a sermon is to bend the knee and to cry to God for direction. That is the first point. He does not do that. He has marked two or three score texts for the next month or two and he has had a bill printed and told the people what he means to preach from, to prove that he is guided by the Spirit for months in advance and not in the same hour when he needs it.

So he looks to see what the text is and takes down various books that he has upon the subject, writes out his Epistle to his Church and the thing is done and he may go out visiting. No groaning over souls, mark, none of Baxter's compassion. No knocking of the knees together as he goes up the pulpit stairs. No sleepless night because he cannot preach as he would. No groaning when he comes home because he thinks there has been a failure where there ought to have been a success. No—the reason is because there is no fire. O God! send down the fire and what a change there will be!

The fire has come. The next Saturday the minister is in his study again and the thought—an awful thought—strikes him, "What if the blood of souls should be at my door?" He gets up. He paces the room—puts his hand upon his forehead. He had never thought of that before! Preaching these years, but he never thought he was responsible for men—never imagined that he must certainly be either his brother's keeper, or his

brother's murderer. He cannot stand it. That discourse he was going to deliver will not do. He will take another. A text comes to his mind. It shall be this—"Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters!"

When he wakes on Sabbath morning. He is all in fear—Suppose he should break down! He lifts up his heart to God. He prays for help. He goes up into the pulpit. He is trembling. He begins to speak. The people do not know what to make of it—the minister is different from anything he was before. He begins to speak to everyone that thirsts and now he begins to cry, "Ho!" He never spoke so loud as that before! Now he begins to plead, "Come you to the waters!" They never saw him stretch his hands out to plead before. "And he that has no money, come, buy wine and milk." And the tears roll down his cheeks and he begins to plead with all the pathos of his nature while he begs souls to come to Christ, to come to Christ, to come to Christ.

The old sleepers find they cannot sleep. Those who have had the most comfortable nap before cannot effect it now. Eyes gleam—rays flash from many eyeballs which had for months been unconscious of a sympathetic glance. Tears are seen. The minister pleads with God after he has pleaded with men. He comes down to the vestry. The old deacon takes hold of both his hands—"Bless God for such a sermon as this, Sir. It has quite stirred me up. This is how old Dr. So-and-So used to preach. And the next deacon says, "I bless God for this. Don't you think we ought to have a special prayer meeting about it? Better give notice of it this evening."

Prayer meeting next Monday. There are not many, but there are four times as many as there were before. And oh, how they pray! Twenty minutes does not do. They pray ten minutes each. They keep to the point. They do not preach. They pray for God to bless the minister. Next Sabbath morning a fuller house. Sabbath evening crowded. Souls are awakened, God is blessing the Word—saints pray, sinners tremble. The neighborhood is changed and Christ is glorified. This is the effect of the fire. O God, send the fire here!

But you will perceive, it is said that the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled the house. The first time the priests could do nothing and they stopped where they were. The second time they had to be more forgotten still, for they could not stay in the house. Let God send the fire of His Spirit here and the minister will be more and more lost in His Master. You will come to think less of the speaker and more of the Truth spoken. The individual will be swamped. The words spoken will rise above everything.

When you have the cloud, the man is forgotten. When you have the fire, the man is lost and you only see his Master. Suppose the fire should come here and the Master be seen more than the minister—what then? Why, this Church will become two, or three, or four thousand strong! It's easy enough in God to double our numbers, vast though they be. We shall have the lecture hall beneath this platform crowded at each prayer meeting and we shall see in this place young men devoting themselves to God. We shall find young ministers raised up and trained and sent forth to carry the fire to other parts.

Japan, China and Hindustan shall have heralds of the Cross who have here had their tongues touched with the flame. The whole earth shall receive benedictions. If God shall bless us, He will make us a blessing unto

all. Let but God send down the fire and the biggest sinners in the neighborhood will be converted. Those who live in the dens of infamy will be changed. The drunkard will forsake his cups, the swearer will repent his blasphemy, the debauched will leave their lusts—

***“Dry bones be raised and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone be turned to flesh.”***

If there is anywhere within these walls tonight a man who has not been within a place of worship for these last twenty years. If there are others who have forfeited all claim to honor and all title to respect, Great God, make these the first-fruits of Your power! Make them now instances of Your mercy, trophies of Your grace! This will be the effect of that fire which of old consumed the sacrifice and which today consumes our sins and fires our works, our songs, our prayers, till all smoke up to Heaven and God accepts them as an offering of a sweet smell.

I shall not detain you longer, having thus set before your mind's eye the two things for which we should earnestly seek and for which we should cry to God. I shall close by simply preaching the Gospel and I do not think that on this first occasion I can do it better than by simply telling the story of how I was brought to Christ myself.

I had been for years as a child in secret the prey of the most desponding feelings. One thought had crushed me. I was a sinner and God was angry with the wicked every day. I began to pray, prayer gave me no comfort, but made my burden more heavy. I read the Bible, the Bible was full of threats to me. I could find no promises there. I attended the house of God constantly but I never knew from all the preaching that I heard what I must do to be saved. My eyes were blind and my soul ignorant. I heard a practical preacher, but what was the use of practice. It was like teaching a man to march who had no feet. I heard the Law thundered but it was not thunder that I wanted—but notes of mercy.

I hope that no creature ever had more intense and awful sorrow of heart than I under conviction of sin—feelings which I studied to conceal from all—and I was thought to be dull and idle because I had little heart for anything. As I have said before, I prayed daily and constantly but my groans seemed to be reverberated from a brazen Heaven and God gave no mercy to me. It might have been so to this day if it had not been for the purpose and Providence of God which prevented me from going to my usual place of worship and compelled me to turn into a little Primitive Methodist chapel.

Now that day was so snowy that there were very few people there and the minister did not come. I think he was snowed up. But they found out some poor man, a local preacher and he was put into the pulpit. Blessed be God. Blessed be God for that poor local preacher. He read his text. It was as much as he could do. The text was, “Look unto Me and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” He was an ignorant man, he could not say much, he was obliged to keep to his text. Thank God for that. He began, “*Look*, that is not hard work. You need not lift your hand, you do not want to lift your finger. *Look*, a fool can do that. It does not need a wise man to look. A child can do that. You don't need to be full grown to use your eyes.

“*Look*, a poor man may do that, no need of riches to look. *Look*—how simple—how simple.” Then he went on, “look unto Me. Do not look to

yourselves, but look to Me, that is, Christ. Do not look to God the Father to know whether you are elected or not, you shall find that out afterwards, look to Me. Look to Christ. Do not look to God the Holy Spirit to know whether He has called you or not. That you shall discover by-and-by. Look unto Jesus Christ.” And then he went on in his own simple way to put it thus—“Look unto *Me*. I am sweating great drops of blood for you. Look unto Me, I am scourged and spit upon. I am nailed to the Cross. I die. I am buried. I rise and ascend. I am pleading before the Father’s Throne and all this for *you*.”

Now that simple way of putting the Gospel had enlisted my attention and a ray of light had poured into my heart. Stooping down, he looked under the gallery and said—“Young man, you are very miserable.” So I was, but I had not been accustomed to be addressed in that way. “Ah,” he said, “and you will always be miserable if you don’t do as my text tells you. That is, look unto Christ.” And then he called out, with all his might, “Young man, look! In God’s name look and look now.”

I did look, blessed be God! I know I looked then and there. And he who but that minute ago had been near despair, had the fullness of joy and hope. And that instant he who was ready to destroy himself could have stood up there and then to—“Sing of Him, whose pardoning blood had washed sins away.” And now here I stand to preach in this great building the self-same Gospel in the same simple tones. Sinners, look to Christ and be saved—

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

Oh, Sinners! What if God should make this your spiritual birthday? And it can only be thus, by your simply looking to Christ! Yes, by the prayers of an earnest wife, I beg you look. Oh, young man! By the groans of a loving mother, I beg you care for your soul and look! Yes, old man! By the decline of years and by those gray hairs and the nearness of your grave, I pray you look! Yes, you sons of poverty, by all that you have to suffer here, look, look to Jesus, that you may find in Him eternal riches! And you rich men, if you would not be cursed by your riches, look and find the healing for the diseases of this life! To one and all is the Word of this salvation sent. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and your house.”

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REHOBAM THE UNREADY

NO. 2749

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 20, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord.”
2 Chronicles 12:14.

You have probably noticed that, as a general rule, the sacred historians, at the end of each king's reign, sum up the character of the monarch and describe him as either doing evil in the sight of the Lord or doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. They give a summary of his whole life in one or other of these sentences—and there will come a day when there will be a summary of your life, and mine—and when it is given, it will run on this wise, “He did evil in the sight of the Lord,” or else on this blessed fashion, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” There is no other course beside these two! These characteristics comprehend all of us and the summary given in our case, as it was in the case of Rehoboam, will be given with great accuracy. It will be Infallible and it will be irreversible. This man Rehoboam was not half as bad as some other kings, still, the Inspired historian was compelled to say, “He did evil.” He was not such an obstinate and outrageous sinner as some were. He was not an Ahab. He was not even a Manasseh—he did not live as that king did in his evil time, yet, “he did evil.” That is the summary of his whole career.

There were some good points about him, as I shall try to show you presently. He sometimes did good, still, when it is all added up, this is the total of it, “he did evil.” And the reason why he did evil is given. One reason, I should think, was that he had a bad mother. Observe how it is written, just before the summary of his life, “His mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess”—one of Solomon's numerous wives—one whom he favored most of all. But she was an idolatrous woman, “an Ammonitess.” And there is little wonder that when the father was no better than he should have been, and when the mother was exceedingly bad, the summary of the son's life should be, “he did evil.”

This makes marriage a most important step, though it is often taken without a single serious thought. See how a woman's life projects itself and either casts a ray of brightness over her children's characters, or a cloud of shame over their entire being. What some of us owe to our mothers, we shall never be able to tell. If we had to write down the choic-

est mercies that God has bestowed upon us, we would have to first mention the mother who prayed for us and taught us to trust in Jesus, by the Holy Spirit's blessing upon the sweet way in which she spoke to us about the Savior. But a mother, trained in the school of Satan, and who has become a mistress in the art of sin is a terrible source of evil to her children. May God have mercy upon any of you mothers who have sons growing up to follow the evil example which you are setting them! Mothers, by the love you bear your children—and there is no stronger love, I think, on earth—if you will not think of your own soul's best interests, I do pray you, for your children's sake, consider your ways and seek the Lord with the purpose in your heart that your children may, if possible, live in the Presence of God.

But the Scripture does not give this as the reason why Rehoboam did evil. It does not say that he did evil because he had a bad mother, nor because his father had not walked with God as he ought to have done. No, the reason was, "because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord." The Hebrew proverb was, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." But the Lord said to His ancient people through the Prophet Ezekiel, "You shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. . . . "The soul that sins, it shall die." God will judge each one according to his own deeds and if you should, unhappily, have been born of the most ungodly parents who ever lived, there is no reason why God's Grace should not begin to work in your family with *you*. If all your training has been adverse to godliness, the Sovereign Grace that takes one of a city, and two of a family and brings them to Zion, may select you as its objective. I know several Brothers and Sisters here who have each one said to me with great sorrow, "I am the only one out of my family, as far as I can judge, that knows the Lord. Looking back, I can trace no pedigree of saints. And looking around me, neither brother, nor sister, nor uncle, nor cousin seems to have any fear of God."

Ah, my dear Friend! If you have been so distinguished by the Grace of God, you ought to love Him much and praise Him much! And as you will be sure to be watched and pecked at, like a speckled bird, mind how you live. May your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven. No, though Rehoboam walks in an evil way, it is not set down to the examples of his father and mother, but it is written, "he did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord." What does this expression mean? I am going to try to find out because I feel sure that the same reason is operating upon a good many other people. It does not say that Rehoboam did evil because he was of a vicious temperament, or because he had strong passions, or because he was a downright thoroughly bad fellow. No, he was not quite that, but he did evil because of something which he did not do—

***"Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do"—***

and as Rehoboam “did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord,” Satan found him evil to do and he did it!

I. So I judge that this expression means, first, that HE DID NOT BEGIN LIFE WITH SEEKING THE LORD.

His father, Solomon, did when he found himself lifted up to the throne of Israel while he was yet a young man. Solomon spread his case before the Lord and asked for wisdom and, in consequence, taking it as a whole, his reign was a grand one, and his kingdom attained to a high state of prosperity. He was faithful to the worship of Jehovah, in the main, though there was a sad turning aside to idols. But he acted wisely in most of his ways, so that the wisdom of Solomon became proverbial. That result was due to the fact that God gave him “wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore.” He asked of God wisdom and God gave it to him. But this foolish son of his asked not for wisdom. The scepter was there, so he grasped it! There was an empty throne, so he sat down upon it. I daresay he fancied it was a very fine thing to be king over Israel and his thoughts did not go much beyond the mere external pomp and splendor of royalty. He did not intend any ill, but he was not very determined upon doing that which was right. And probably he never thought of commencing his career by asking the blessing of God upon it. I hope no one whom I am addressing would resolve to lead a bad life, but, mind you, it may happen to you, as it did to Rehoboam, that the summary of your life will be, “he did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord.”

So much in life depends upon how we begin that I could wish that no boy ever left his home to go to school—that no boy ever left school to go to a clerkship, or to serve his apprenticeship to a business—without stopping a while and praying the Lord to guide him in every step so that he might act wisely. And I might add that it would be well if older men would do the same and, in beginning anything fresh, prepare their hearts to seek the Lord.

This young man Rehoboam felt that he needed some kind of guidance, yet he did not seek the Lord, but *he called together a number of counselors*. Now, it is quite right to seek counsel of men who are wiser than we are, but he who trusts to earthly counselors instead of to God is guilty of great provocation against Him who is full of wisdom and who ought to be the Guide of our youth and of our whole lives. Calling his father’s wise counselors together at the beginning of his reign, Rehoboam submitted the people’s grievances to them, but, like the fool that he was, he rejected their counsel and followed the foolish advice of the younger men like himself—the fops about the court, the swells, the gilded youths of the period—and so committed a gross act of folly.

It usually happens that when men will not ask counsel of God, if they go to other sources for guidance, *they generally accept the very worst form of advice*. When men trust in men, it is strange how often they trust in the worst and not in the best of men! Yet I know not that it is strange, for that same infatuation which leads a man to reject his God, almost

necessarily leads him to despise those upon whom God has bestowed any measure of light and wisdom. So this young prince asked counsel of others who were as foolish as he was and the result of following their advice was that 10 tribes out of the 12 were torn away from him and formed into an independent kingdom. What a different life there might have been, not only for himself, but for those who were dependent upon him, if he had but humbly waited upon God for guidance and had given the people a gentle reply to their very reasonable demands, and had ruled them, not with a rod of iron, but with gentleness and kindness! There might have been two Solomons succeeding each other which, perhaps, is too much to expect among kings and princes, for Solomons are rather scarce in that direction. However, so it was, because he did not begin by seeking the Lord, he made a fool of himself and a failure of his life.

Perhaps some of you young people say, "Well, we are not going to give our hearts to God, yet we shall not be fools." Ah, but you are already fools, or else you would not talk like that! And the probability is that before long, in the plenitude of your self-sufficient wisdom, you will take a step which seems plain enough to you, but which will lead you into a world of sorrow and to no end of trouble! Blessed is that young man who says, "My Father, You shall be the Guide of my youth." Blessed is that young man who gets God on board the vessel of his life at the start, with His hand on the rudder, to steer the vessel through a safe and prosperous voyage till he reaches the Fair Havens and casts anchor in the Port of Peace!

This, then, was the folly of Rehoboam, that he did not begin life by seeking God and, therefore, he began it foolishly.

II. But our text means more than that. It means, next, that REHOBOAM SHOWED NO HEART IN DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT.

He did what was right at the first but he had no heart in doing it. The Prophet came to him when he had mustered his forces, and forbade him to go to war with the followers of Jeroboam—and he disbanded all his troops. That was, truly, a most worthy thing to do, and you and I, looking on at the scene, would have said, "That is a noble young prince. If he obeys the voice of a Prophet like that, surely he fears God." But he did not. He did right because *from the training his father had given him, he had a high esteem for Prophets of God.* He had seen his father entertain Prophets with great honor and he did not like to despise them.

There is many a young man, nowadays, who has great regard for God's ministers, though he is not, himself, a Christian. He remembers the times when they used to be at his father's house, when they slept in the Prophet's chamber. He remembers many happy evenings he had, as a boy, when they were guests at his home—and he could not bring his mind to despise them, or to make a jest of what they say. No, to some extent, he gives heed to what they have to say, and he tries to shape his moral character according to their teaching, yet he does not yield himself to Christ—so nothing comes of it all.

If it had been a prophet of Baal who had come to him, I am afraid that Rehoboam would have done just what he told him to do. And there are now many young men who appear to be excellent simply because they are in good hands, but if they had been under the influence of evil men, they would have been as bad as could be, for they have no individuality—they have no heart in doing the right thing. It is well to come to the House of God, my dear Friends, but I like to see people come because they *want* to come. I observe some people, even on the Sabbath, walking along to their place of worship with their books under their arm in a most solemn manner and all the while looking as if they were going to be flogged! And when they come out, they look just as if they had passed through that experience!

I like to see people go tripping to God's House with sacred joy, as if it were the merriest place in all the world. When I come into the Tabernacle, I often repeat those lines by Dr. Watts—

***“Peace be within this sacred place,
And joy a constant guest!
With holy gifts and heavenly Grace,
Be her attendants blest!
My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains!
There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
There God my Savior reigns.”***

It is well to worship the Lord heartily, with a zest, with holy fervor, to do it because you like to do it and take a delight in it. It is one thing to be right in appearance and another thing to be right in your soul. “But,” says one, “I thought it was best to do right when you do not like to do it. I thought there was something very meritorious if a person was religious though he could not endure it.” No. That is *hypocrisy* and nothing else!

When a person puts on the garb of religion, all the while feeling that he would gladly take it off if he could—only pretending to be a Christian. When, if he could have his own way, he would have a Continental Sabbath—he is nothing but a hypocrite! When he does get his own way, he manages to have his Continental Sabbath and he just amuses himself all that he possibly can on God's holy day. No matter what the foreigners do, he is among them in the very thick of it, and he thinks they have a very blessed kind of Sunday. When he is at home, he does not do such naughty things—oh, no, certainly not! And this hypocrisy is what you think is virtue? Because you do not like true godliness, you think it must be good for you to pretend to imitate it—but that will never do. The Psalmist rightly says, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways of them.” He is the man who runs in the way of God's commandments with intense delight! But this Rehoboam did not do so. When he was doing right, he did it because he felt some respect for the Prophet, but that was all.

It was soon evident that his heart was not right towards God, for *he imitated his father Solomon in his faults*. His father's great fault was the multiplication of wives and into this evil, Rehoboam fell. And, moreover,

all the strength of Rehoboam's heart and soul went in what was a very proper direction in itself, namely, in the building of cities and the storing of them with provisions, and fencing and garrisoning the towns. Yet that direction was a very bad one because it took him away from God. I like to see a young man, whatever he does, throw his whole soul into it, but not so act that he throws his soul away from God by it. There was some force in what the first of the Rothschilds is reported to have said when he had been making money. Someone said to him, "You are bringing up your sons to make money, I suppose?" He answered, "Of course I am, what else should they do?" "But, still," said the other, "I am sure that you must wish them to look to something higher and something better." "No," he replied, "I do nothing of the kind! If a man wants to make money, he must give his heart and his soul to it—and that is what these young men have to do. And they must not have their minds distracted from the one pursuit they have in life, namely, to make money, or else they will never succeed at it."

I have no doubt there is much truth in that remark which also applies to higher things. There is such little real force in man, at his best, that he must put all of it into one thing if he is to have success in it. So this Rehoboam put his whole soul into one thing and, therefore, "he did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord," but prepared his heart to seek after other things. "But," someone asks, "may not a man be attentive to business?" He ought to be! He should be diligent in business, but always with this higher motive outreaching everything else—that he may win Christ and be found in Him and that his life may bring glory to the God who made him and to the Christ who redeemed him with His precious blood. But, oh, young man, if you do not prepare your heart to seek the Lord. If what you do that is good, is done in a happy-go-lucky style. If you are good because you happen to be in a good connection and you stay right because Christian people around you keep you right—and you would not like to grieve your father and vex your friends—then there is nothing in it at all! You will go to the bad, one of these days, when you get into other circumstances and meet with new temptations.

A man ought not to live depending upon somebody else's backbone—he should have one of his own—and if he has none, one of these days he will be crushed. If you profess to be a Christian, throw your whole soul into it and say, "Let others do as they will—as for me, I will serve the Lord and not feel it a bondage, but take a delight, in it. And I will serve Him with all my heart!"—

***"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known!"***

III. There is a third point about Rehoboam contained in the words of our text, "He did evil because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord," that is, HE WAS NOT FIXED AND PERSEVERING IN HIS RELIGION. The original bears that sense.

He began well and, in the first three years of his reign, the nation worshipped God. I do not suppose that he really did so himself, but, still, he was on that side. He was one of the evangelical party. He was one of the God-fearing party and, therefore, he prospered. His apparent reverence for God brought the Levites to live in his dominions and brought others of the best people of Israel to come there and to strengthen his hands. Thus he prospered and you might have thought that as his religion brought him prosperity, he would stick to it. Not he! There was no “stick to it” in him.

As soon as ever he prospered, *he began to grow proud*. He was a fine fellow, he had splendid kingdom, a very attractive dominion. Did not all the good people come there? So growing proud, he began to forsake the Lord and the people, following his evil example, worshipped in groves instead of coming to the Temple at Jerusalem. Worse than that, they set up graven images and idolatrous pillars. And their heart went aside from God and they practiced the most accursed sin that ever stained and defiled the face of the earth! You know the sin for which God sent the judgment of fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah—and there were some of these people who thus sinned, making an act of worship out of the most bestial crime. Yet Rehoboam did not trouble himself about that. When the people feared God, he was willing, then, they should do so, but now, if they followed Ashtaroth, they might do as they liked. He was, after all, but a young ruler who thought that the principal business of a king was to enjoy himself—so he let things go just as they could. He was king, but, still—well, if God was good, it was proper for good people to reverence Him—but if other people did not, he did not trouble his head much about that matter—it sat very lightly upon him.

In consequence of this, *God brought up Shishak from Egypt* with multitudes of chariots and horsemen and an innumerable host of people. Then were the Jews in a state of great alarm and Rehoboam, who was easily molded any way—for he had a sort of India-rubber heart—humbled himself and the princes of Israel humbled themselves. God knew that these other people were sincere in humbling themselves, so He allowed their sincerity to season the whole bulk and He, therefore, accepted the humiliation of king and people and delivered them.

You see how readily Rehoboam went—first towards God, then towards idols—and then back again towards God. *He was always ready to shift and change*. He worked no great reforms in the land—we do not read that he held a great Passover, as Hezekiah did, or that the high places were taken away, And, as soon as Shishak was gone, he felt perfectly content. There was not anything real and permanent in his religion—it did not hold him. He held *it* sometimes, but it never held him.

O dear Friends, is not this Rehoboam a specimen of a great many people who are now living? They get into a warm-hearted meeting and they feel the power of it. They meet a friend and he takes them into different society altogether, where there are merry songs and plentiful jokes, and they feel the power of that. They hold with the hare and they

run with the hounds. They are “everything by starts, and nothing long.” And the result is that they do evil, for, when a man is not fixed in his resolve to do good—when he does not take his stand, in the name of God, with a life and death determination, it is not doubtful which way he will go!

IV. The last point involved in this description of Rehoboam is this—HE HAD NO CARE ABOUT SERVING GOD.

He did not care whether he served the Lord or not and, as to serving Him in a right spirit, that never entered into his head. He never “prepared his heart.” If he went to a service—well, he was there, but that was all. Some people who have come here tonight never thought of breathing a prayer before they came, nor after they entered the building. They would even venture, if we allowed them, to *partake* of the Communion at the Lord’s Table without self-examination and without prayer—they do everything without any preparation of the heart.

But look, Sirs, *if there is no care about making the heart go right, it must go wrong* because the natural tendency of our mind is toward evil. If you leave your heart to follow its own natural impulse, it is impossible that it should seek the Lord. It is only when it is *prepared* to seek the Lord that it ever seeks Him—and that preparation of the heart is from God, so that if we do not ask the Lord to prepare our hearts to seek Him, we shall never seek His face at all!

And look yet again, *all the current in which we are found runs the wrong way*, so that if there is no preparation of the heart, we know which way it will go. Company will draw it, not towards right, but towards wrong. And the set of the age—the general current of the period—is not towards God but away from Him. If you put a barge in the middle of the river, I know which way it will go—it will go with the tide. It is only by adjusting the rudder, and by wise steering, and hard rowing that it could be made to go against it. So, if your heart is not prepared to seek the Lord, it will not seek Him and it is sure to go in the opposite direction. What is preparing the heart to seek the Lord? I should say that it is something like this.

First, *to feel my need of God*. What can I, a creature, do without my Creator? What can I do without a Father in Heaven? I have offended Him. I have sinned against Him. I have gone far away from Him, but I want Him to forgive me and to save me. We must be conscious of this need—may the Spirit of God prepare us to seek the Lord by giving us a deep sense of our desperate need of God’s mercy!

The next thing is *to cry unto God for help*—“Lord, save me! God be merciful to me a sinner! Renew my heart, change my nature, subdue my stubborn will and make me Your child!” Prayer prepares the heart to seek the Lord and you will never seek Him if you do not pray to Him. In fact, prayer is an essential exercise in seeking the Lord.

Then, further, if we would be prepared to seek the Lord, there must be *a submission of ourselves to His guidance*—a coming to Him and saying, “Here I am, Lord. Make me what I ought to be. I agree to Your Com-

mandments. I delight in them, help me to run in them. I yield my proud self and lay down at Your feet my prejudices and my willfulness and ask You to guide me in the right way.”

There must also be *the acceptance of God's plan of salvation*. He who would live the right kind of life must come to God and say, “My God, You save them that believe. Help me to believe. You give eternal life to as many as believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Lord, I believe. Help You my unbelief.” This is the true way of preparing the heart to seek the Lord.

And even when that faith is given, the right preparation is to *serve God always with thoughtfulness and care*—not to go blundering on any way, hit or miss, as some do. It is a terribly sad thing to pretend to serve God without thought, without watchfulness, without care, for God is not such an One that we may rush into His Presence whenever we like, without premeditation, solemnity, or reverence. If you were to go to visit a king, you must be prepared to enter the royal presence under court regulations—and behave yourself in a seemly manner. And much more is this necessary when we seek the Lord. Every holy duty ought to be thought over carefully. Every prayer, every almsgiving, every attempt to serve God should be done with due consideration—and with holy anxiety to do it in the right manner, at the right time, and in the right spirit.

Now, because Rehoboam did not act thus and did not, indeed, care to trouble his brain about such things as this, “he did evil.” And if any man here says, “Well, I do not trouble myself about religion. I believe I shall be all right. I cannot be always sitting down and pulling a long face and reading the Bible, and trying to find out how I am to live. I just take the first chance that comes and do the best I can.” If you talk like that, you will do evil as surely as you are a man, for he who devotes not his whole soul to fighting the battle of life will certainly lose it. To go to Heaven is not such an easy matter that every fool may do it before breakfast. It is a thing which, as it needed the blood of the Son of God to pave the way, and needed the eternal Spirit, Himself, to give us life to run in that way—is a matter of serious import and of solemn moment—and the whole heart, soul and strength must be set upon the attainment of eternal life, or we shall not secure it. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” So, may God the Holy Spirit help you to think seriously about Divine things, or else you will do evil because you prepared not your heart to seek the Lord.

Now I want just two or three more minutes in order to make an application of my subject. And, first, dear Friends, is it not possible—I want to whisper this round among the members of this Church—is it not quite possible that there may be some nominal professors who come under the description in the text? Their conduct appears to be admirable and, up to now, has probably been so, but they have never prepared their heart to seek the Lord! I fear that, in all our churches, there are people who are called Christians simply because they were brought up among Christians. They need to be brought down, to be converted, regenerated, born-again—for they have only been born after the flesh.

There was an Ishmael in the household of Abraham, so we need not wonder if there are such people in all our churches. They have never prepared their hearts to seek the Lord. It has not been heart-work with them. Perhaps conscience sometimes says to them, "Is it not a pity that you never joined the church?" I know who will take this question home and fret over it—it is you good creatures for whom I do not mean it, but those to whom it applies will say, "Oh, he cannot mean me!" There are, alas, many such people and they are hardly likely to be converted now because they entered the church before they were converted and, consequently, whatever is said, they think, "He cannot mean me." But, my dear Friend, we *do* mean the very person who says, "He cannot mean me," and we do not mean some of those who take home those searching questions and are troubled by them.

Whenever anybody says to me, "Oh, I am afraid I am a hypocrite!" I do not think he really is one. I never knew one who was really a hypocrite, who was afraid he was one! Those who are truly so usually have no such fear. Still, it will be well for each of us to ask these, questions, "Is my heart prepared to seek the Lord? Is my heart in my religion? Do I try to serve God with all my heart? Do I make it a matter of serious thought, or is my religion all upon the outside?" If it is so, the probability is that, one of these days, there will come a sudden temptation to you and over you will go! I have known ministers, deacons, and elders—gray old men—fall into sins which one would have thought only silly boys would fall into! And we can only think, when we see such men apostatize, that they never prepared their heart to seek the Lord. Their religion was only skin-deep—it was not that true Christianity which has its root in the soul by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.

Now another question. Are there any young men here who are very hopeful and promising characters, who like religious gatherings and attend to everything that is of good repute—and yet have not sought and found the Lord? Shall I tell you what troubled me before I gave my heart to Christ? It was something which had great influence upon me in bringing me to decision. There was a boy at school who was some few years older than I was and he was a very excellent lad. My father (you know that fathers speak thus, sometimes) used to tell me he wished I was half as good as that boy was—he was a kind of pattern lad. Well, he grew up and came to London to a drapery establishment. He wrote home most delightful letters to his mother, telling her that he was going to hear such-and-such a minister on Sunday morning, and such another one on Sunday evening. And I used to hear what a good lad he was. All of a sudden he came home—he could not be kept in the establishment. There was money missing and he was suspected of stealing it. He had not been to those places of worship at all! He had spent his Sundays—well, Satan knew where—he had been as bad as bad could be all the while he was there.

My father never mentioned him to me any more, but I distinctly recollect feeling, "Well, if So-and-So, whom I thought and believed, and who

seemed to be such a good lad, to whom I used to look up, has turned out such a downright scamp, may not I do the same?" It seemed to me that if I did not begin in a better way than he did, by really getting a new heart and a right spirit, I might morally come to the same sort of smash as he did. And I may further tell you that among the things that led me to Christ was the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints. I heard that Jesus would keep the feet of His saints and I said to myself, "Then, if I give myself to Him, He will ensure the preservation of my character and He will keep me to the end." And the only bargain I ever made with Him, when I gave myself up to Him, was that He would always have me in His holy keeping. O young men, I can recommend that plan to you! I earnestly entreat you not to commence life even with the best moral resolutions. Go straight away to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to grant you Grace that you may give yourself up wholly to Him. You cannot keep yourself, but He can keep you and He will keep you even unto the end, for He has said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

Lastly, do I address anyone—old or young, it is no matter, who, like Rehoboam, has not sought the Lord and, like Rehoboam has got into a world of trouble through it? Have you lost the 10 tribes? Has Shishak come against you? You did wrong, you know you did, for you forsook your God, and now, after that, do you still refuse to seek Him? For, mark you, Rehoboam did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord even after he had been attacked by the king of Egypt! Chastisements are lost upon some people! There is someone of Rehoboam's sort here tonight. It is the first time he has been out since his serious illness. Blessed be God that you did not die then, my Friend! You know what the angels heard you say when you were lying on your bed. "Please God, if I am ever raised up from this illness, I will seek the Lord." That is partly the reason why you are here and I am very glad to see you! But you must not think that coming here will save you. It is no use seeking the Tabernacle—you must seek the Lord! Oh, do not, I pray you, let this warning be neglected, nor let the vow that was registered in Heaven be forgotten—but seek the Savior with all your heart!

And you, my Friend, over yonder, were in a shipwreck. There were many lives lost and you had been a swearing fellow, but you said, "Please God, if I get ashore, I will turn over a new leaf." Well I do not think the new leaf is much improvement on the old one! That was not what you meant, was it? It was that you would become a better man if you were saved from the jaws of Hell. You were saved from the watery grave, yet you have not prepared your heart to seek the Lord. O my dear Friend, God does not send Shishak many times, you know! After He has sent him once, and there is no softening of the heart, or girding up of the loins to seek Him, He will send another messenger and it will be written of you, as it was of Rehoboam, "He slept with his fathers, and his son reigned in his place." But where was Rehoboam? He never sought the

Lord so, perhaps, when he had passed out of this world, where he had shilly-shallied and vacillated, where he had been pliable and plastic to every influence—when he passed into the next world there was realized by him the terror of that dreadful curse, “Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer. They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me.”

Then was fulfilled to him that other terrible prophecy, “Because I have called, and you refused. I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded. But you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your fear comes.” Think of God’s laughing and mocking at a soul that has passed into eternity without Him—it is a most dreadful thing, whatever it may mean, and it will be fulfilled in you—you hopeful people, you plausible people, you undecided people unless you prepare your heart to seek the Lord!

It may be that some of you are standing, at this moment, on the very verge of everlasting life and if the devil can keep you there, he will be perfectly satisfied, for you will perish if you remain there. Do not satisfy him, I implore you! O mighty Grace of God, come upon them, now, and make them, each one, say, “I will stand here no longer! I will cross the line—I will give myself up, once and for all, to Jesus.” That is right, young man, young woman, cross the river, burn the bridges, sink your boats and say—

***“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!”***

The Lord make it so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—575, 662, 658.

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

SERVITUDE OR SERVICE—WHICH?

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“Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.”
2 Chronicles 12:8.

THE people of God had left their God and He had left them, so that Shishak, the king of Egypt, came against them, and though the Lord had respect to their humble prayer and would not suffer Shishak to destroy Jerusalem, yet He brought them into subjection to the Egyptian king. Our text tells us the reason for this servitude—“They shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.”

Beloved Friends, the children of Israel were bound to the service of God. Jehovah had chosen them out of all the nations of the world to be His people. He had committed the Holy Oracles to the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—they were, from before the foundation of the world, set apart in the eternal purpose to be the Lord's. That highly honorable and gracious choice ought to have bound them to His service. In addition to this, they were called out by His own voice. Their father, Abraham, was fetched out from Ur of the Chaldees where he served other gods, and he was led to know Jehovah and to follow Him. He walked with God and God was very familiar with him, so that He spoke with him as a man speaks with his friend. All along the ages God called His people out from the world. Especially did He call them out of Egypt, delivering them out of the house of bondage with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. He led them through the wilderness, fed them with manna and instructed them and, in this way, He separated them to be His own peculiar portion beyond all the sons of men. By their calling, then, as well as by their election, they were bound to keep close to the one living and true God.

And above this, as if to make them doubly His own, He entered into a Covenant with them. It was first made with Abraham, then it was renewed with Isaac and with Jacob. The Covenant was still further ratified in the wilderness where the Lord promised that when they came into Canaan, He would be their God and He would bless them. But He stipulated that they must obey His voice, cling to Him and have Him, only, to be their God. Also His Word and His Law were to be the rule and guide of their life.

This Covenant, God always kept, but the people broke it very soon, so that Moses shattered the tablets of stone, a fit symbol of the way in which Israel broke the Law of God!

Is it not very sad to think that the great God, who made the heavens and the earth, should have but one nation out of all the inhabitants of the world—and these His by choice, by calling and by Covenant—and yet that they should continually grow weary of Him? Other peoples did not change their gods. It was a rare thing for a nation to cast away its idols in those days. But Israel, which alone had the true God, while the rest had gods that were only idols, quit the living and true God to set up in His place the gods of the heathen which could do them no good!

Now, this phenomenon of human nature, this going after idols and leaving the true God, is constantly being renewed. We have the same thing, even, in the Church of God, which never seems to be satisfied with chaste love for Christ, but continually goes after one strange lover and another. Thus Christ's pure Truth is left for some brilliant error! And His simple worship is deserted for some invention of man! Even when God spoke by His servant, Shemaiah, the Prophet, the men of Judah were itching to be after their idols and panting to get away from God! And the Lord said, "Inasmuch as they have forsaken Me, I have left them in the hand of Shishak, and they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

I. In considering these words, tonight, I shall say, first, that THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOMS OF THE COUNTRIES.

We have many round about us who have deliberately chosen not to serve God, but to serve other masters. O Beloved, if you have chosen to serve God, it is because God has chosen you! If I am speaking, tonight, to any of you whose one objective in life is God's Glory, who can truly say that you live as in the fear of God, and before Him, endeavoring to please Him—that is evidence of a work of Grace within your heart. You are very grateful that such a work of Grace has been worked upon you, but how many there are of our follow men who have chosen some other god and some other way of living!

Some choose *to be the slaves of open sin*. Hardly, I think, would they choose such slavery if they really knew all that it included, but they have chosen it practically. How many there are who are the devotees of drunkenness! Ah, me, what can they see in Bacchus that they should worship *him*? Others are the slaves of licentiousness. I need not mention the forms of uncleanness in which so many wallow in this foul city of ours, where the temptation to sin is in every street. The forms of evil are many—I need not mention them, for, if I did, I might omit one and then, perhaps, the person who is under its influence might fancy that I did not think it to be a sin! But if you choose to live for sinful pleasure, let me tell you that you have entered upon a servitude compared with which the service of God is light and pleasant, indeed. Whatever the strictest form of religion may re-

quire of you, it will never demand of you so much as vicious pleasures will. I could stand here and tell of cases that have come under my own notice, of men and women who, in pursuit of sin, have brought themselves to beggary. Have I not seen the son of honest and godly parents clothed in rags and covered with vermin, so that when I spoke to him, I could not, with the utmost sympathy, dare to come within an arm's length of him?

Have I not seen the same sort of person, through drunkenness, full of disease, bloated and surely soon to die? And when other sins have been added to these, have we not, sometimes, been in a hospital where, talking with a wretched man upon his bed, who brought upon himself the whole of his disease, we could not but feel that a martyr, when he died at the stake, did not endure for God such awful agony as this poor fool endured in the pursuit of his lusts? I tell you, and I defy the world to doubt the statement, that the service of sin is the most horrible of slaveries and, that, when men give themselves to it, and their passions become dominant, the worse serfdom that there ever was upon the face of the earth is *freedom* compared with the bondage of a man's own passions!

If you want to know the truth about this matter, I would not advise you to learn it by experience, but I would recommend you to go to someone who has run his evil course and has come to the end of it—and ask him if it is not true that the wages of sin is death! Then go to the dying Christian, like one of our Brethren who has passed away this week, a man who spent his Sabbaths preaching the Word and earned his bread in the weekdays. When he came to die, with an internal cancer, those who saw him said that nobody could be happier, nobody could be more full of triumph than he in the prospect of soon being with his Savior! Oh, let me serve God! Let me not serve my lusts! Young men, young women, God help you, by His Grace, to make that wise and happy choice at once!

There are many persons who are not the worshippers of vice, but they are the *voraries of making money*. They are the slaves of the thirst for wealth. This is a very common evil and I invite you to look upon those who have made gain the one objective of life. Some have carried it out very resolutely. The miser lives poor that he may die rich. He scrapes money together that his heir may fling it away. I think that his god is a very poor one and that the service he renders to his god is a very wretched business, for when he succeeds in gathering money, then there is the care of keeping it—and with some it is a very great care, indeed! I will not mention the name of one of the richest men of this period, but I believe it is true that when one congratulated him upon his great wealth, he said, "Oh, do not talk in that way! Here is a fellow who has just written to me, saying that I must give him £200 or else he will blow my brains out! And, wherever I am, I am always being persecuted for money. Money brings no happiness to people who possess it." He is one who ought to know, for he has more than most men. You will find that persons who rise in what are called the ranks of society, do not have more happiness—they only have a heavier load to carry.

I find one stick to be a great help to me when I go out walking, but if I had a bundle of 20 sticks, I suppose I should find it quite a load to carry. And those who accumulate so much wealth often have to confess that the game is not worth the candle—they have only acquired that which they cannot enjoy. A man cannot wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, after all, and let him do what he likes, he cannot eat seven dinners in a day, and he cannot enjoy ten times more than anyone else. While the poor man always has a stomach for his meat and his only trouble is to get meat for his stomach, this poor rich man can find no appetite to enjoy his dainties. Ah, the advocate of making money is employed in a hard service! I have seen him, even when he is getting old, and when he has made sufficient wealth, with his nose still on the grindstone! He must always be at the office. He must be always sticking to his post like the worst paid clerk in the place—and he is still as stingy as ever. He has buried himself beneath a hill of gold. Live for God, my dear Sir—He will give you the things of this life—He will show you how to get as much as shall be truly useful to you! But if you make gold your god, you will serve a hard master!

There are some others who do not try to get much money, but they are *lovers of fashion, lovers of society, admirers of the world*. I will not say much about these ladies and gentlemen. I do not think that I have enough respect for them to speak about their special form of slavery. They must go away from London when “society” goes. They would be ashamed to stay at home when fashionable people go out of town. They must go to such-and-such a place, not because they care to go there, but because it is the fashion! They have to do just *this* much and they must not do *that* much. Poor slaves, I should like to snap every link of their chains! It does seem such a dreadful piece of slavery for men and women that they dare not do what is right, and what they would like to do, but must do what other people do! Etiquette binds them hand and foot. Oh, that they had but the will and the strength to break these fetters! The man who dresses for fashion and lives for fashion, ceases to be a man! I know what they call such creatures, but I will not repeat the term of contempt which is applied to them. The woman who lives only to be fashionable ceases to be a woman. I will say no more about her. This idol of fashion is a hard and silly god, for it requires its devotees to make themselves into fools, if not into something worse.

Then there is another cult that has lately come up which some have chosen, so that they have become the *devotees of “culture.”* Many have forsaken the simple Gospel and turned away from the belief in their Bible which their mother had, and in which their father died, because they want to be considered very thoughtful and clever and superior persons! Now, I have noticed that whenever a person gives up his belief in the Word of God because it requires that he should believe a good deal, his unbelief requires him to believe a great deal more. If there are any difficulties in the faith of Christ, they are not one-tenth as great as the absurdities in any system of unbelief which seeks to take its place! I do not hesitate to

say that the whole doctrine of Evolution, with which many men are fascinated today, is ten thousand times more absurd than the most ridiculous travesty of what is taught in the Word of God and, it requires more faith, and also far greater gullibility than to believe any doctrine which is deduced from Holy Scripture!

You will find great demands made upon your faith by Shishak, if you become his servants. He will tax you and take all you have, whereas, to believe what God has said is, after all, but a reasonable service. The man who goes in for the new ideas in religion—the man of “progress,” who is so wise and learned—must confess that he loses that sweet rest of heart that he has seen in Christian people, which was enjoyed by the godly woman described by Cowper—

**“Who knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew.”**

There is safe anchorage for us, here, but there is no anchorage in the sea of *personal infallibility*. “Oh!” says one, “I never claimed *that*.” No, my dear Sir, but there must be infallibility somewhere—and if you are the judge of the Word of God, you have shifted the infallibility from the Word to yourself—and you are really the claimant of it. In your own heart of hearts, you think so! Where will you ever get rest with such a delusion as that? He who rests on himself, rests on a very frail foundation, indeed!

I believe this night that upon which I can pray, that upon which I can live, that upon which I can die! My faith is fixed in the revealed Word of God and I find that it sustains me in the hour of bitter bodily pain, with which I am too well acquainted—and in the hour of deep depression of spirit, with which I am all too familiar—and in the time of cruel desertion, for I have had some of the best friends fail me. And in the time of slander, for who has had anything worse spoken of him than they have uttered against me? I can fall back upon the eternal Truths of God—they are the hills from which my help comes—and they never fail me. Can any man say the same of his “culture” and “progress,” and of his “advanced thought”? Can he live or die on such stuff as that? Why, he cannot even live on it, for, by his own admission, he cannot write out his creed because he believes one thing, today, but he may believe quite another thing tomorrow—and the next day he will, in all probability, have shifted his ground, again. Oh, this Shishak, this new god, lately come up—his service is unspeakably harder than the service of the eternal Truth of God—and there is no wage to be won from it!

I will only refer to one more class of those who have chosen the service of the kingdoms—these are *the seekers of self-righteousness*. This is an old-fashioned and very respectable deity whom many still worship. They are seeking to be saved by their own works, by their charitableness, by their religiousness, by sacraments, by priests, by their own feelings, by something of their own! It is a hard way in which a man never has any rest or assurance. It is a way in which he runs because of the crack of the whip behind him—“Do this and you shall live! Do not do this and you

shall perish!” How infinitely superior is the way of simply trusting Christ and then obeying Him out of gratitude—not *working for* life, but *from* life! Not seeking to serve Christ in order to be saved, but because you *are* saved, and wish to work out that which God has worked in you, to will and to do of His own good pleasure!

Surveying these different masters, I venture to say, once and for all, and then I leave this part of my subject, that those who have chosen the service of the kingdoms have made a very foolish and evil choice—and that those who have chosen the service of God may forever bless the Lord with all their hearts!

II. Here is our second point. SOME SEEM TO BE PINING TO GIVE UP THE SERVICE OF GOD AND TO GO TO THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOMS.

It is a strange thing, but this evil is always breaking out even among the people of God. Some want to change out of *sheer love of change*. That you should want to change ministers, I do not at all wonder—my voice must have become very monotonous to some of you—but that you should want to change *gospels*, that does distress me! That there should be any man who grows weary of the everlasting chimes of the glorious notes of Free Grace and dying love appalls me. No, no! Let me hear the voice of God through eternity, for it has a perpetual freshness and novelty about it! I can bear with the monotony of the preacher, if the monotone is still full of Jesus and His love. But there are some people who cannot be constant to anything. They are like the moon. You could not measure the moon for a suit of clothes with the hope of ever fitting it and, so, you cannot tell what these men are or where they are, for they are always changing.

Some want to be off to their idols because of *the outward aspect of the new thing*. It looks grand to them to go in for the “culture” ideas, and it seems a fine thing to live for the world. Men of the world seem so grand as they roll along in their carriages—why should we not be as great as they? Then there is something very tangible about minding the main chance, for, after all, if you do not get the pounds and pence, where are you? The world will not think much of you! “Oh!” says one, “I like the thought of this following after Christ, but He is a root out of a dry ground, and His people are generally poor, common sort of folk. I should like to get in among the uppermost people.” When men begin to run down the people of God, I always find that they are not worth much, themselves. When any man is ashamed of a child of God because he is poor, he must be a very poor creature, himself. But that is often a reason for turning away from the service of God to the service of the kingdoms.

Sometimes men turn aside because of their *loss of joy in the service of God*. They are not serving the Lord as they used to do. They are doing but little for Him. Now, a little religion is a very bitter thing. If you have only a little of it, you will find that there is no sweetness in it. It is like the boys that go to bathe in the river in the early morning. One just dips his foot in

the water. “Ugh!” he cries. It shivers him right through, but he who takes a header and plunges in, glows all over in a moment! I wish that some religious people would just take a header. If they did, they would feel the joy of the Lord thrill through them and there would be no fear that they would ever want to leave His service. Beware of a little godliness! To say, “I want just as much religion as will take me into Heaven, just as much godliness as will save my bacon,” is dishonoring to Christ and essentially evil. When the joy is gone out of religion, we do not wonder that men want to get away from it.

Then, there are many who are led to want a change from the service of God by *the flagging of others*. They meet with many who say, “Well, really, you are not going to keep to that old style of things, are you?” Another says, “I have found something very brilliant and fresh.” They listen to these tempting voices and they think to themselves, “One cannot *always* go against the stream.” If they would really think, they would remember that *live* fish swim against the stream—it is the *dead* fish that go floating down with the tide. I like the man who says, “I am not going to take my religion from my companions. If they do not intend to go to Heaven, I am sorry for them. But as for myself, I know what I am doing. My heart is fixed, almighty God, fixed on You, believing in Your dear Son, resting in His precious blood! I am resolved, come fair or foul, to keep my face towards the Celestial City till I behold the King in His beauty and reign with Him forever and ever.” God give you that fixed and firm resolution! Many cannot do anything contrary to their surroundings—they must do as other people do, poor creatures that they are.

There are some who turn aside because religion has brought them to a point where *it entails some extra self-sacrifice*. I have known some who have said, “Well, I am prepared for many things in the cause of God, but we must draw a line, somewhere. One may buy gold too dearly. I could not, for instance, give up my employment. If my employer commanded me to do a wrong thing, I think that I should stretch my conscience a little and do it. I could not lose my job.” Another says, “Well, I could not enter a protest against such-and-such an error. If I did, I should have all my friends down upon me and they would call me bigoted and narrow-minded.” And that would break your heart, would it? It would be a very soft heart if it would. “Oh, but really, I am not the man to stand out by myself!” Are you not? Remember that text, “The fearful”—that is, the cowardly—“and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.” God grant that you may not have that for your portion! Oh, that you may follow Christ at all hazards! Be this your word—

**“Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I’ll follow where He goes!
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry,
Though earth and Hell oppose.”**

III. I am going to finish with this point. THERE IS A GREAT CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND ANY OTHER SERVICE.

The service of God is delightful. Remember, young man, if you are about to engage in the service of God, *there is nothing demanded of you that will harm you*. There is no Commandment of God which, if you keep it, will injure either your body or your soul. There is nothing asked of you but what will be for your benefit—nothing that will really be to your loss. If it should seem to involve a present loss, yet it shall be turned to future gain, for God will overrule it for your permanent good.

Next, notice, that *there is nothing denied you in the service of God that would be a blessing to you*. The promise is, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” You shall neither have less pleasure, nor less strength, nor less real honor if you obey the Commands of God. You may seem, sometimes, to give up what appears to be pleasant to you, but God denies His children nothing that would be really for their advantage. The service of God is, after all, such a service that if we lived selfishly, we might wish to live as God bids us live. If a man were infinitely wise and could fashion a life which, upon the whole, would be best for himself, he could not do better than to fashion it according to the Commands of God and the example of Christ—and you cannot say that of any of the servitudes of which I have spoken.

Once more, observe, that *in the service of God strength will always be given according to your day*. When you serve the Lord, if He sends you out upon a tough piece of work, He will give you extra Grace. And if He calls you to great suffering, He will give you greater patience. He does not require of you more than He is prepared to give you. He will do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think! What a service is this in which we are never sent to warfare at our own charges? Shishak, the king of Egypt, and all the Egyptian kings built pyramids and dug canals. You have often wondered how they made them. In the reign of one of them, nearly a third of a million of people were forced to go and dig a canal—and they were not only *never paid a penny*, but they never had even a piece of bread given to them, nor were they even furnished with tools. The bulk of them had to dig out the canals with their own fingers and they perished by the thousands. That is your Shishak, king of Egypt! That is the devil’s service all over! There is no reward given and no help whatever. You are left to do the best you can—and that best brings you no reward, either in this life or in that which is to come.

Here, again, is a further beauty about the service of God, that there is *no threat made to hang upon it*. You are saved if you are a believer in Christ—that matter is done with—Christ has saved you! You do not go out to work for God with any idea of winning Heaven, or of escaping Hell by what you do. You are saved and you serve the Lord with a higher, purer, grander motive, namely, that of *unselfish gratitude*, loving Him because He first loved you! You serve God after a very different fashion from the servitude of sin. The servitude of a slave is bitter, but the service of a son is sweet—and to *that* we are called!

And all the while that you are the servant of God, *you have a sweet peace in reflecting upon what you have done*. Did you ever go out for a day, or for an evening, with friends, spending a merry time in gaiety, perhaps not altogether censurable, but still, not entirely commendable? When you have gone upstairs to bed, have you not thought, “Well, somehow, I do not feel quite happy”? When you went to pray, did you not feel as if you had broken your knees? And when you awoke in the night and thought over what seemed so very nice at the time, was it not honey in your mouth, but gall in your stomach? Did you ever spend a whole day in the service of God? When you have gone to bed at night, how have you felt? Very tired, perhaps, but oh, so thankful that you could look upon it all without regret! You could chew the cud of that service! There was something in the remembrance that soothed you in the night. As George Herbert said, when he helped a poor woman with her load—and men wondered that the parson of the parish should carry a poor woman’s basket for her—“The memory of this will make the bells ring in my heart at night,” so the service of God makes the bells ring in our hearts!

Lastly, there is above all this, *a hope of the eternal reward which is so soon to come*. I spoke, the other day, on board ship with a Brother in Christ, and as we talked together, I said, “Well, you know, I may be in Heaven in a quarter of an hour. If the ship went down, I do not believe that it would make any difference to me.” And he said, “Nor to me.” I believe that we were the happiest men on board that steamer! How sweet it is to feel that you are not your own, but that you belong to God! If you really belong to God, He will not lose you. He has never, yet, lost anything that was truly His. He puts the broad arrow or the bleeding heart on you to show that you belong to the King! The devil, himself, dares not run away with you. God will call for you in that day when the inventory of the Divine possessions shall be read. You shall be known as marked by the King—and you shall be His forever and ever! Oh, let us try to live so that we can die in the same style as we are living!

It is well to be walking in such a way that you can walk right straight on though a grave should be in your way—and walk right straight through it—and out at the other side. Young man, are you going the way that you would like to keep on going forever and ever? The train is starting. You are taking your seat. Which way do you want to go, to the realm of brightness, or the land of eternal darkness? Take your seat in that carriage which will go right through to the better land and, taking your seat, feel, “Now the train may go right onto the terminus. For this purpose did I enter it, that I might go to the end of the journey.” Many want to go as far as they can down the dark valley and *then* they hope that they will get out at some station or other and change their track. Be not so unwise, but, tonight, enter the right train! Lay hold on eternal life! Put your trust in Jesus and may we meet in Heaven without having had to know by bitter experience the awful difference between the service of God and the service of the kingdom of darkness!

God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.
1 KINGS 14:21-24; 2 CHRONICLES 12.

1 Kings 14:21. *And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. After great mountains often come low valleys. Solomon was a wise man—Rehoboam was otherwise.*

21. *Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. Rehoboam ought to have been a good king. Jerusalem was the holy city, the chosen city. God put His own name there. It is a sad thing that this king should try to put away God's name from the chosen city.*

21. *And his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. There was bad blood in him. How often do we find that the good king has a good mother's name mentioned with his own! Bad kings generally come from some stranger, some heathen princess. It was so with Rehoboam.*

22. *And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. Their fathers had been great sinners, but, in the days of David, they had not set up false gods. In the days of Solomon, after the Temple had been built, they began to go astray. It is a curious thing that a high ritualistic service, even if it is right, is usually attended with a coming down in spirituality. When the Temple service was instituted, it was the beginning of a decline, but in Rehoboam's day that decline became more apparent, the "down-grade" became more visible.*

23. *For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree. They could not have enough of it. When men go wrong, they generally go wrong very greedily—they cannot have too much of evil.*

24. *And there were also Sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. When men once turn aside from the living God to follow inventions of their own, there is no telling where they will go. Nothing is too foul, nothing is too filthy for them. Now read the same story as you find it in*

2 Chronicles 12. Verse 1. *And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom. and had strengthened himself, he forsook the Law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. They prospered, at first, by adhering to Jehovah. The good people out of the neighboring land of Israel emigrated to them, strengthening them, but, as soon as they grew strong, they forsook the Law of Jehovah.*

2. *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem because they had transgressed against the LORD. Shishak did not know that fact, nor did he care about*

Jehovah. God so ruled in Providence that when His people cast Him off, He soon found a rod with which to chasten them. The King of Egypt determined to conquer them. You do not know, my Friends, how God will strike you, but if you err from His statutes, He will never be long without a rod. You will bring chastisement on yourself if you depart from the living God. You will have yourself to blame if some dire affliction happens to you.

3. *With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.* This vast crowd ate up everything! The rule was to quarter on the enemy. They would devour every eatable thing throughout the whole country!

4. *And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.* When God means to chasten a people, He does not take long to do it and neither can their weakened strength successfully oppose their enemy.

5. *Then came Shemaiah the Prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus says the LORD, You have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.* The Prophet gave them no invitation to repentance, but just an explanation of the sorrow which had come upon them.

6. *Whereupon the princes of Israel and the King humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.* That was well done. They had not yet become so confirmed in their rebellion as to reject the Prophet of God and to turn in willful, wanton, resolute disobedience against him.

7. *And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves.* Though it was not in a spiritual way, yet

7. *The Word of the LORD came to Shemaiah saying, They have humbled themselves: therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. He shall not storm the city! He shall not destroy it.*

8. *Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* The Lord's people were to know the difference between the service of God and the service of the kings of the countries round about them. It would be a very sharp contrast and a very bitter one.

9. *So Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD.* The Temple was always very rich. Shishak came and stripped it. Everything there that was really valuable was taken away.

9. *And the treasures of the king's house; he took all.* He could not very well take any more. That is generally the way with the devil. God is satisfied with tithes, but Shishak and Satan take *all*.

9-11. *He carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. Instead of which king Rehoboam, made shields of brass, and com-*

mitted them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber. That was a come-down, indeed, from shield's of gold to shields of copper! That is, I suppose, what is meant here by the brass. This is what the king suffered at the hands of Shishak and it was an emblem of the condition of his people. The golden kingdom had become a bronze one.

12. *And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that He would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well. Or, some behaved well. Even a measure of humiliation is acceptable with God. And though He did not save the nation from being plundered, yet He did rescue it from being altogether struck. Alas for Rehoboam, he did a bad day's work when he turned away from God!*

13, 14. *So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam, was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And he did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD. He was one of that fickle sort, neither here nor there—a compromising gentleman—not very definite in anything. He would go right if he were driven that way, and he would go wrong if he were led in that direction. Oh, how many there are who never prepare their hearts to seek the Lord! They are not determinately bad—they have not enough backbone in them to be leaders in evil—but they are never good for much because they have never made up their minds to do the right at all costs. They have never had their heart prepared by the Holy Spirit to seek the Lord.*

15, 16. *Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the Prophet, and of Iddo the Seer concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah, his son, reigned in his stead. So they pass away. One generation dies and another follows. God grant that when we fall asleep it may not be with the sin of Rehoboam lying upon us, neither may we be succeeded by evil sons, but may we serve God in our day and be followed by those who shall serve Him still better! The Lord grant it! Amen.*

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

A LESSON FROM THE LIFE OF KING ASA

NO. 1152

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

***“Herein you have done foolishly: therefore from
henceforth you shall have wars.”
2 Chronicles 16:9.***

OUR text leads us to speak upon historical matters, and for this I shall by no means apologize, although I have sometimes heard very foolish professors speak slightly of the historical part of Scripture. Remember that the historical books were almost the only Scripture possessed by the early saints and from those they learned the mind of God. David sang the blessedness of the man who delighted in the Law of the Lord, yet he only had the first five books and, perhaps, Joshua, Judges and Ruth—all books of *history* in which to meditate day and night. The Psalmist, himself, spoke most lovingly of these books, which were the only statutes and testimonies of the Lord to him, with, perhaps, the addition of the Book of Job.

Other saints delighted in the histories of the Word before the more spiritual books came in their way at all. If rightly viewed, the histories of the Old Testament are full of instruction. They supply us both with warnings and examples in the realm of practical morals. And hidden within their letter, like pearls in oyster shells, lie grand spiritual Truths of God couched in allegory and metaphor. I may say of the least important of all the books what our Lord said of children, “Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones.” To take away from Holy Writ involves a curse upon the daring deed—may we never incur the penalty!

I feel Scripture is given by Inspiration and is profitable—be it ours to gain the profit. Let us see whether we cannot get a lesson from the life of King Asa. We will commence by noticing *who he was and what he had done in his better days*, for this will help to understand more clearly the fault into which he fell. He was a man of whom it is said that his heart was perfect before God all his days. It is a great thing to have said of anyone—indeed, it is the greatest commendation which can be pronounced on mortal man! When the *heart*, the intention, the master affection is right—the man is reckoned a good man before the Lord, notwithstanding that there may be a thousand things which are *not* commendable—yes, and some things which are censurable in the man’s outward career.

Asa is noticeable, in the early part of his life, for the fact that he set up the worship of God and carried it out with great diligence, though his mother was an idolater and his father, Abijah, was little better. He had enjoyed no training as a youth that could lead him aright, but quite the con-

trary. Yet he was very decided, even in the first days of his reign, for the Lord, his God, and acted in all things with an earnest desire to glorify Jehovah and to lead his people away from all idols to the worship of the true God.

Now, a life may begin well, and yet may be clouded before its close. The verdure of earnestness may fade into the sere and yellow leaf of backsliding. We may have the Grace of God in our earliest days, but unless we have, day by day, fresh help from on high, dead flies may pollute the ointment and spoil the sweet odor of our lives. We shall need to watch against temptation so long as we are in this wilderness of sin. Only in Heaven are we out of gunshot of the devil. Though we may have been kept in the ways of the Lord, as Asa was, for 50 or 60 years, yet if left by the Master for a single moment we shall bring discredit upon His holy name.

In the middle of his reign Asa was put to the test by a very serious trial. He was attacked by the Ethiopians and they came against him in mighty swarms. What a host to be arrayed against poor little Judah—an army of a million footmen and 300,000 chariots! All the host that Asa could muster—and he did his best—was but small compared to this mighty band. And it appeared as if the whole land would be eaten up, for the people seemed sufficient to carry away Judea by handfuls. But Asa believed in God and, therefore, when he had mustered his little band, he committed the battle to the Lord his God. Read attentively that earnest believing prayer which he offered. “And Asa cried unto the Lord his God and said, Lord, it is nothing with You to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; let not man prevail against You.”

How grandly he threw all his burden upon God! He declared that he rested in the Most High and believed that God could just as well achieve the victory by a few and feeble folk as by a vast army. After this prayer he marched to the battle with holy confidence—and God gave him the victory. The power of Ethiopia was broken before him and Judah’s armies returned laden with spoil. You would not have thought that a man who could perform that grand action would become, a little after, full of unbelief! But the greatest faith of yesterday will not give us confidence for today unless the fresh springs which are in God shall overflow again. Even Abraham, who at one time staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet did stagger some time afterwards about a far less difficult matter. The greatest of God’s servants, if their Lord hides His face, soon sink even below the least. All the strength of the strongest lies in Him.

After Asa had thus, by Divine strength, won a great victory, he did not, as some do, grow proud of it, but he set to work, in obedience to a prophetic warning, to purge his country by a thorough reformation. He did it, and did it well. He did not show any partiality towards the rich and great in his country who were guilty of the worship of false gods. His own mother was a great fosterer of idolatry and she had a grove of her own

with a temple in it—in which was her own peculiar idol. But the king put her away from her eminent position, took her idol and not merely broke it, but stamped upon it and burned it, with every sign of contempt, at the brook Kidron, into which ran the sewage of the temple—to let the people know that, whether in high places or among the poor—there should be nothing left to provoke the Lord throughout the land.

This was well done. Oh that such a reformation might happen in *this* land, for the country is beginning to be covered with idols and mass houses! Everywhere they are setting up the altars of their broaden deity, shrines to the queen of heaven, the crucifix and the saints, while the *spiritual* worship of God is put aside to make room for vain shows and spiritual masquerades. The God of the Reformation—how much is He forgotten nowadays! Oh for a return of the days of Knox and his covenanting brethren! Asa was for a root and branch reform and he went through with it bravely. You would not have thought that a man so thorough—a man who, like Levi of old, knew not his own mother when it came to the matter of serving God, but made “through stitch” with it, as the old writers used to say—you would not have supposed that he would be the man who, when he came to another trial, would be running after an idolater and cringing before him and praying him to help him!

Alas, the best of men are men at the best! God, alone, is unchangeable! He, alone, is always good, or, indeed, at all! “There is none good save one, that is God.” We are only good as He makes us good. And if His hand is withdrawn, even for a moment, we start aside like a deceitful bow, or a broken bone which has been badly set. Alas, how soon are the mighty fallen and the weapons of war broken if the Lord upholds not! Asa, who could do marvels, and who walked so well and thoroughly before his God, yet, nevertheless, came to do foolishly and bring upon himself lifelong chastisement. I have thus brought before you his character because it was most fitting to start with this. It was due to his memory and due to ourselves, for we must remember that whatever we shall have to say against him, he was assuredly a child of God.

His *heart* was right. He was a sincere, genuine, gracious Believer. If any object that he had grievous faults and, therefore, could not be a child of God, I shall be obliged to answer that they must, first of all, produce a faultless child of God this side Heaven before they will have sufficient ground for such an objection. I find that the holiest of men in Scripture had their imperfections, with the sole exception of our Master, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, in whom was no sin. His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them, but all His servants had their spots. He is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. But we, with all the brightness His Grace has given us, are poor dim lamps at best.

I make no exceptions, even of those who claim perfection, for I have no more faith in their perfection than in the Pope’s infallibility! There is enough of the earthen vessel left about the best of the Lord’s servants to show that they are earthen—and that the excellency of the heavenly treas-

ure of Divine Grace which is put within them may be clearly seen to be of God and not of them.

I. Now, we shall turn to notice the GRAVE ERROR INTO WHICH ASA FELL—the foolishness for which the Prophet rebuked him. He was threatened by Baasha, the king of the neighboring territory of Israel. He was not directly assailed by war, but Baasha began to build a fortress which would command the passages between the two countries—and prevent the people of Israel from coming to settle in the land of Judah, or make their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Now, one would naturally have expected, from Asa's former conduct, that he would either have thought very little of Baasha, or else that he would have taken the case to God, as he did, before, in the matter of the Ethiopians.

And this was a smaller trouble, altogether, and somehow, I fancy, it was *because* it was a smaller trouble, Asa thought that he could manage it very well himself by the help of an arm of flesh. In the case of the invasion by countless hordes of Ethiopians, Asa must have felt that it was of no use calling in Benhadad, the king of Syria, or asking any of the nations to help him, for with all their help he would not have been equal to the tremendous struggle. Therefore he was driven to God. But this, being a smaller trial, he does not seem to have been so thoroughly divorced from confidence in man. He looked about him and thought that Benhadad, the heathen king of Syria, might be led to attack the king of Israel and so draw him away from building the new fort. It would also divide his attention, cripple his resources and give Judah a fine opportunity of attacking him.

Believers frequently behave worse in little trials than in great ones. I have known some children of God who have borne with equanimity the loss of almost everything they had, who have been disturbed and distracted and led into all sorts of doubt and mistrust by troubles that were scarcely worth the mentioning. How is it that vessels which bear a hurricane may, nevertheless, be driven upon a sandbank when there is but a capful of wind—that ships which have navigated the broad ocean have yet foundered in a narrow stream? It only proves this, that it is not the *severity* of the trial, it is the having or not having of God's Presence that is the main thing! In the great trial with the Ethiopians, God's Grace gave Asa faith, but in the little trial with Baasha, king of Israel, Asa had no faith and began to look about him for help from men.

Observe that Asa went off to Benhadad, the king of Syria, who was a worshipper of a false God—with whom he ought to have had no connection or alliance whatever! And, what was worse, he induced Benhadad to break his league with Baasha. Here was a child of God teaching the ungodly to be untrue—a man of God becoming an instructor for Satan, teaching a heathen to be false to his promise! This was policy. This is the kind of thing which the kings of the earth practice towards one another—they are always ready to break treaties, though bound by the most solemn pledges. They make but light of covenants. The great matter with ambas-

sadors even nowadays is to see which can entangle the other, for, as a statesman once said, “An ambassador is a person who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country.”

Oh, the tricks, plots, deceptions, equivocations and intrigues of diplomacy! No chapter in human history shows up our fallen nature in more mournful colors. Asa, I have no doubt, thought that all was fair in war. He took the common rule, the common standard of mankind, and went upon that. Whereas, as a child of God, he ought to have scorned anything that was dishonorable or untrue. And as to saying to a heathen king, “Break your league with Baasha and make a league with me”—why, if he had been in a right state of heart, he would sooner have lost his tongue than have uttered such disgraceful words! But, child of God as he was, when he once got off the plain simple way of believing in God and taking his trouble to God, there was no telling what he would do.

When you set the helm of your vessel towards the point to which you mean to steer, and steer right on, whatever comes in your way, your course will be well enough if you have a motive power within independent of wind and tide. But when you take to tacking this way, then you will have, in due time, to tack the other way—and when policy makes you do this wrong thing, policy will lead you to do another wrong thing—and so on, to a most lamentable degree. When our walk is with the Lord, it is a safe, holy, honorable walk. But the way of the flesh is evil and ends in shame. If you follow the way of the world, though always a crowded way, it will turn out, before long, to be a miserable, pettifogging, cringing, humiliating, dishonorable and wretched way to the true-born heir of Heaven!

Dust shall be the serpent’s meat and if we practice the crawling, twisting, slimy arts of the serpent, we shall have to eat the dust, too. Should a child of God degrade himself in that fashion? If he acts as he should act, he acts like a nobleman, no, like a *prince* of the blood imperial of Heaven, for is he not a son of God, one of Heaven’s true aristocracy? But when he degenerates to acting as worldlings do, then, alas, he stains his garments in the mire! I charge you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, to look well to this. Perhaps I may be speaking as God’s mouth to some of you who are now entering upon a testing time, a trouble in the family, a trial in business, or a difficulty in reference to a contemplated marriage, and you are asking, “What course shall I take?”

You know what a man of the world would do and it has been suggested to you that such a course is the right one for you to follow. My dear Brother, remember you are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world! Mind you act accordingly. If you are a worldly man and do as worldly men do, why, I must leave you—for them that are without God He judges. But if you are a man of God and an heir of Heaven, I beseech you, do not follow custom or do a wrong thing because others would do it! Do not do a little evil for the sake of a great good, but in your confidence possess your soul and abide faithful to conscience and to the eternal law of

rectitude. Let others do as they please, but as for you, set the Lord always before you and let integrity and uprightness preserve you.

Ask the Lord to help you. Is it not written that He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape? “Cast your burden upon the Lord: He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.” Do not put forth your hand to iniquity. You may, in order to help yourself, do in five minutes what you cannot undo in 50 years! And you may bring upon yourself a lifelong of trial by one single unbelieving action. Beware of staying yourself on Egypt and sending for help to Assyria, for these will distress you and help you not! Cry, “Lord, increase our faith!” That is what you greatly need in the trying hour, lest you should, like Asa, first of all, turn from confidence in God and, then, looking to an arm of flesh, should be tempted to use illegitimate means in order to induce the creature to let you rely upon it.

Asa, having advanced so far in the wrong path, did worse, still, if worse could be, for he took of the gold and silver which belonged to the House of the Lord, in order to purchase the alliance of the Syrian monarch! I will say nothing about what belonged to his own house. He might do as he liked with that, so long as he did not spend it upon sin. But he took of the treasure that belonged to the House of the Lord and gave it to Benhadad—to bribe him to break his league with Baasha—and be in league with himself! Thus God was robbed, that the unbelieving king might find help in an arm of flesh. And, “Will a man rob God?”

A Christian never doubts God and looks to the creature without robbing Him. If you rob Him of nothing else, you rob Him of His honor. Shall a father find his child trusting a stranger rather than his own father? Shall the husband see his wife putting confidence in his enemy? Will not that rob him of that which is far more precious than gold? Is it not a breach of that undivided affection, and that complete confidence which ought to exist in the conjugal relationship? And shall I mistrust my heavenly Father, my almighty Helper, and put confidence in a poor, broken reed? Shall I cast my burden upon a poor fellow sinner and forget to rest in my Savior? Shall the Well-Beloved of my soul be only trusted in fair weather? And shall I have such a sorry opinion of Him that when it comes to a little storm, I run to someone else and ask *him* to be my refuge?

Beloved, let it not be so with us, or we shall surely grieve the Lord and bring ourselves into much perplexity! Have we not already been guilty enough of this? Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we bent upon grieving His Holy Spirit? Can we not take warning from Asa? Need we run upon this rock when we can see the wrecks of others all around? The Lord grant we may take heed according to His Word! So this good man, by his lack of faith, fell into many sins. I am compelled to add that he had to bear the blame of the consequences of his conduct, for when Benhadad, the king of Syria, came up and attacked Israel, he did not content himself with a battle or two, but he fell to plundering the Israelites and murdering them wholesale, so that great sorrows were brought upon the people of Is-

rael. And who was to blame for these sorrows but the king of Judah, who had hired the Syrians for that very purpose?

He who ought to have been a brother to the Israelites became their destroyer! Every time the cruel sword of the Syrians slew the women and children of Israel, the poor afflicted people had Asa to thank for it. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of waters—none can foresee what devastation the floods may cause. Brethren, we can never tell what may be the consequences of one wrong action! We may kindle a fire in the forest merely to warm our hands, but where the sparks may fly—and how many leagues the conflagration may spread—an angel cannot prophesy! Let us jealously keep away from every doubtful deed lest we bring evil consequences upon others as well as ourselves. If we carry no matches, we shall cause no explosions.

Oh, for a holy jealousy, a deep conscientiousness and, above all, a solemn conscientiousness on the point of faith! To rest in the Lord—that is our business! To stay ourselves only upon Him—that is our sole concern! “My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” Unbelief is, in itself, idolatry! Unbelief leads us to look to the creature, which is folly. To look to the creature is, in effect, to *worship* the creature, to put it into God’s place and so to grieve God and set up a rival in the holy place.

I want you to listen yet a little while longer to this story of Asa. It came to pass that Asa’s hiring Benhadad turned out to be a fine thing for him and, in the judgment of everybody who looked on, I dare say it was said that it was a fortunate stroke of business. According to God’s mind, the king’s course was evil, but it did not turn out badly for him *politically*. Now, many people in the world judge actions by their immediate results. If a Christian does a wrong thing and it prospers, then at once they conclude he was justified in doing it, but, ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a poor, blind way of judging the actions of men and the Providence of God! Do you not know that there are devil’s providences as well as God’s Providences?

I mean this. Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish to flee from God and he went down to Joppa—and what? Why, he found a ship just going to Tarshish. What a providence! What a providence! Are you so foolish as to view it in that light? I do not think Jonah was of that mind when he cried unto God out of the deeps! When the chief priests and Pharisees would take Jesus, they found Judas ready to betray Him. Was this also a providence? May not *Satan* have some hand in the arrangement which lays a weapon so near a murderer’s hand, or renders robbery and fraud so easy? Do you think it an instance of Divine goodness that the tares often grow plentifully when the wheat suffers from drought? Often have we observed people who wanted to do wrong and things have just happened rightly to help them—and they have, therefore, said, “What a providence!”

Ah, but a Providence that was meant to test and try, not a providence that was intended to aid and abet in the doing of a wrong thing—a Providence not to rejoice in, but concerning which we are taught to pray, “Lead

us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” A wrong is a wrong, whatever comes of it! If by uttering one falsehood you could become a rich man forever, it would not change the nature of the falsehood. If by doing one wrong transaction you could rid yourself from all liabilities in business and be, from now on, in competent circumstances, that would not, before God, take off the edge of the evil! No, not a single jot! God was pleased, for wise reasons, to allow the policy of His erring servant Asa to prosper, but now you will see that Asa was put in a worse place than ever because of it.

The trial of Asa’s spirit, the testing of his unswerving faithfulness—whether he would walk before God or not—became more severe than before, for God sent His servant the Prophet to him, and he said to him, “When you came to God, and trusted Him about the Ethiopians, did not God prosper you? Though there were so many of them, did not the Lord give you the victory? And now you have gone away from your faith, you have lost a great blessing by it; for if you had trusted in God, you would have gone to war against Baasha *and* Benhadad, and you would have beaten them both, and your own kingdom would have grown strong by the putting down of these rival kingdoms. But you have lost that; you have acted very foolishly, and God means to chasten you for it, for from this very day you will have no more peace, but you will have war so long as you are a king.”

Now, observe, if king Asa had met with a trouble when he acted unjustifiably, he would have been humble, I have no doubt. Then he would have seen how wrong he was and he would have repented. But inasmuch as what he had done did not bring disaster with it—and God did not chasten him—the king’s heart grew proud and he said, “Who is this fellow that he should come to tell his king his duty? Does he think I do not know, as well as he can tell me, what is right and what is wrong? Put the arrogant intruder in prison.” When a Prophet came to Rehoboam, who was a bad king, Rehoboam did not put him in prison—he respected and revered the Word of the Lord. A bad man may do better than a good man on some one particular occasion—and so Rehoboam did better in that matter than Asa did.

But Asa was now *all* wrong, he was in a high bullying spirit—and this was but what we might have expected, for whenever a man will cringe before his fellow men, you may be sure he is beginning to walk proudly before God. In his haughtiness of heart he put the Prophet in prison! Instead of weeping and humbling himself for what he had done, he imprisoned his reprover! And then, being in an irritable temper and a domineering humor, he began to oppress certain of his people. I do not know who they may have been, but probably they were godly persons who sympathized with the Prophet, and said, “We shall surely meet with a terrible judgment for dealing thus with God’s servant.” Perhaps they spoke freely about it and so Asa put them in prison, too.

Thus God's own child had become the persecutor of God's servant and of other faithful ones. Oh, it was very sad, very sad! Well might God, then, resolve that the angry should smart for his faults very severely, that the rod should come home to his bone and his flesh, and render his remaining days exceedingly sorrowful. O beloved Friends, among your most earnest prayers pray God never to let your sins prosper, for if they do, they will breed a gangrene in your spirit which will lead on to yet more dangerous diseases of your soul! And they will inevitably entail upon you a dreary inheritance of affliction. God does not always whip His children the next minute after they do wrong. Sometimes He tells them that the rod will come and so makes them smart in *apprehension* before they smart in actual experience, for they are thinking of what it will be and that may be even a worse trial to them than the trial itself.

But as surely as they are His own peculiar people, they must and shall be taught that sin is an exceedingly great evil, and they shall have no joy of their dalliance with it. Thus I have shown you who Asa was, and what faults he fell into, and how this led to other faults.

II. And now we have to show you *what God did with him when he came to a close reckoning*. "Now," He seemed to say, "I will take you in hand Myself," and He sent him a disease in his feet—a very painful disease, too. He had to suffer night and day. He was tormented with it and found no rest. God's own hand was heavy upon him and some of us know to our regret that disease in the feet can become a very grievous affliction, second, indeed, to none, unless it be a malady of the brain. Now did the king learn that embroidered slippers give no ease to gouty feet and that sleep flies when disease bears rule.

This should have driven Asa to repentance, but, to show that afflictions of themselves will not set a man right, Asa had fallen into such an unbelieving spirit that, instead of sending to God for help, and crying for relief to Him who sent the disease, he sent for the physicians! It is not wrong to send for physicians, it is quite right—but it is very wrong to send for physicians in place of crying to God—thus putting the human agency *before* the Divine. Besides, it is very probable that these physicians were only heathen magicians, sorcerers and pretenders to magical arts, and could not be consulted without implicating the patient in their evil practices. Though Asa would not approve of their heathenism, yet he might think, "Well, they are famous for their cures, and who they may be is not so much my concern. I will put up with that—if they can cure me, they may come."

So his unbelief deprived him of the cure which God could readily enough have given him and he had his physicians and their medicine, but they were miserable comforters to him, giving him no relief, and probably causing him to suffer more than he would have suffered without them. They were physicians of no value, and their medicines were a delusion. How often is it so when we persist in looking away from God? He who has God has all, but he who has all besides God has really nothing at all!

Asa's life, after that period, was a life of war and pain. His evening was clouded and his sun set in tempest. Have you ever noticed the career of David? What a happy life David's was up to one point! In his youth he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but he was very merry. What joyful Psalms he used to sing when he was a humble shepherd boy!

And when, afterwards, he was an exile in the caves of Engedi, how gloriously he poured out notes of gratitude and joy! He was at that period, and for years after, one of the happiest of men. But that hour when he walked on the roof of his house and saw Bathsheba—and gave way to his unholy desires—that hour, I say, put an end to the happy days of David. And though he was still a child of God and God never cast him away, yet his heavenly Father never ceased to chasten him. From that day his life teemed with trouble—troubles from his own children one after another, ingratitude from his subjects—and annoyance from his enemies. Afflictions sprang up for him as plenteously as hemlock in the furrows. He became a weeping monarch instead of a rejoicing one. The whole tenor of his life changed—a somber shade was cast over his entire image. You recognize him as the same man, but his voice is broken. His music is deep bass, he cannot reach one high note of the scale. From the hour in which he sinned he began to sorrow more and more.

So will it be with us if we are not watchful. We may have led very happy lives in Christ up to this moment—and we know the Lord will not cast us away—for He does not cast away His people whom He did foreknow. But if we begin to walk distrustfully and adopt wrong actions, and dishonor His name, He may from that moment, say, “You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities. Because I love you I will chasten you, for I chasten every son whom I love. And now, because you have thus gone astray, you shall be filled with your own backslidings. Your own vanities shall become your vexation throughout the rest of your days.”

Asa does not appear to have had any peace until at last he fell asleep, and then, I trust, his dying bed was as sweetly perfumed with penitence and pardon as his funeral couch was odoriferous with fragrant spices. The sweet spices of forgiving love and reviving faith were there and he died rejoicing in his God through the great Sacrifice. Brought back after a time of wandering, the cloudy day, at last, ended in a calm, bright evening. But who wishes to go so far astray, even if he is, at length, restored? O Brothers and Sisters, we do not merely want to go to Heaven, but we desire to enjoy a Heaven on the road to Heaven! We would like not only to come up from the wilderness, but to come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved! We would not wish to be saved, “so as by fire,” but to have an abundant entrance administered to us into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Asa's character was well known among the people and they loved and respected him. The mistake he had made grieved many of the godly, I do not doubt, but for all that, they felt that one fault must not blot out the

recollection of nearly 40 years of devoted service to God. So they loved him and they honored him with a funeral worthy of a king—a funeral by which they expressed both their sorrow and their esteem. But may it never be said of you and of me, “He led a good life. He was eminent in the service of God and did much, but there was an unhappy day in which the weakness of the flesh mastered the inner life.”

O dear Sister, if you have brought up your children and have seen your family about you—and they have been proofs to all the world of the way in which you have walked with God and of your care to discharge your duties—do not let your old age be given up to petulance and murmuring and complaining so that your friends will have to say of you, “At the last she was not the happy Christian woman that she used to be.” My dear Brother, you have been a merchant and you have resisted a great many temptations. You have been noted for your honorable character—do not now, in a moment of extreme trial, begin to doubt your God! May the Holy Spirit preserve you from so great an ill. In the time of your need you will find the Lord to be Jehovah-Jireh. He is no fair weather Friend, but He is a shelter from the storm, a covert from the tempest.

Stand fast in your faith in Him! Do not question your God and do questionable things in consequence, for, if you do, it will be said by those who come after you, and perhaps even while you live by those who love you. “He was a good man, but there was a sad period of weakness and inconsistency. And though he was deeply penitent, yet from that unhappy day he went limping to his tomb.” What a precious Christ we have, who saves such sinners as we are! What a dear and blessed Lord we have, who does not cast us away, notwithstanding all our slips and falls and shameful wanderings! Beloved, let us not be so base as wantonly to grieve Him—

***“We have no fear that You should lose
One whom eternal love could choose.
But we would never this Grace abuse.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall.”***

With such a warning as this of Asa before us, now, do not let us relax our watchfulness and insensibly turn aside. “The path of the just is as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

That is your model—that is the promise which Scripture sets before you. Plead it and try to realize it. Let us go from strength to strength. Let us ask to grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If we have wanted props up to now—outward and visible props—and have not been altogether able to rely upon God, may the Lord help us to grow stronger so that we may have done with Ready-to-Halt’s crutches! May we walk uprightly before the Lord because we rely upon Him, trusting always in His sure faithfulness, and in the power which guarantees that His promise shall be fulfilled.

I do not know to whom I may be speaking a necessary word, except that I know it is necessary for myself. Perhaps there are some here to whom it may be just the word that is needed. Dear Brother, the life of

faith is a blessed one! A Believer's course is a tried one—it is a warfare—but, for all that, all the sorrows of faith put together do not equal in bitterness one drop of the sorrow of sin, or one grain of the misery of unbelief. The king's highway may be rough, but By-Path Meadow, in the long run, is the rougher way of the two! It looks very pleasant to walk on the green turf, but remember, it is only in *appearance* that By-Path Meadow is smooth. The ways of Christ are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace as compared with any other paths in the world. And if they were not—if to serve the Lord led us only into sorrow and trouble—I trust the loyal hearts here, the virgin souls whom Christ has chosen, would resolve through floods or flames, if Jesus led the way, to follow still!

O Beloved, may you cleave to the Lord by a simple faith! May you cleave to Him when the many turn aside! May you witness that He has the Living Word and none upon earth beside! Because your hearts are frail and feeble, ask Him, now, to cast the bands of His love about you and the cords of a man to bind you fast to His altar that you may not go away from it. For except He holds you fast, you must, you *will* decline and prove apostates after all. But He will hold you! He will keep the feet of His saints! Only trust not in yourselves. "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool." If any man says, "I stand," let him take heed lest he fall!

Beware of that self-confidence and spiritual boasting which is becoming common among Christians! Some even brag of their attainments—when, if they did but know themselves, they would confess that they are nothing better, even at the best, than poor, naked, miserable sinners! We all have need to look to Jesus, for we are nothing but empty boasters apart from Him! Only in Christ are we anything. "When I am weak, then am I strong," but at no other time. When I think I have a reason to glory, then am I, indeed, despicable! I know not myself and have become nearly blind, so as only to see what my own pride makes me *think* I see.

May the Holy Spirit keep us humble—keep us at the foot of the Cross—keep us flat on the promise, resting on the eternal Rock and crying, "I am nothing Lord—nothing! You are All in All. I am all emptiness—come and fill me. I am all nakedness—come and clothe me. I am all weakness—come and glorify Your power, by making use of me!" God bless you, dear Friends, and if there are any among you who have not a God to trust in, or a Savior to love, may you seek Jesus now! If you seek Him, He will be found of you, for whoever believes in Him is saved! Whoever trusts Christ is saved! Pardon and salvation belong to every soul that hangs its hope upon the Cross! May God bless you richly, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Parts of 2 Chronicles 14, 15. 16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—668, 667.**

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1891.**

***“And next to him was Amasiah the Son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the Lord; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor.”
2 Chronicles 17:16.***

IT was a great thing for King Jehoshaphat to have such a pious lord-lieutenant, one who could command an army and, at the same time, obey the commands of God. Christian men ought greatly to value Christian servants, especially if such persons are employed in positions of trust. If we can have godly men to occupy our offices and transact our business, we should be very grateful and do our best to encourage and cheer them. It is true that sometimes those who make the loudest profession of religion are the least trustworthy, but that very fact shows that there is something in the religion they falsely profess, which, if really laid hold of, makes a man more upright and reliable. Otherwise why should it be counterfeited? The larger the responsibility, the more necessary it is to have men who can be depended upon to manage the business. It was for the great benefit of Jehoshaphat, as king, that he should have a godly captain over so large a part of his army as 200,000 mighty men of valor.

It was also a great thing for the country of Judah to have a godly man in such a position. “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.” I hope that in England there will be an increasing desire that those persons who represent us in Parliament, or who legislate in any way, should be men of good character. The day will yet come when it will be judged that those who are immoral are not the men to make our laws or to see that those laws are carried out. It is, however, a great blessing to a country to have godly men in high places who will see to it that right is done, that justice is maintained and that the ends of true religion are promoted. Happy is the nation that has godly officers to discharge its business—men who fear God and fear no one else!

I wonder how this man, Amasiah, the son of Zichri, came to be a servant of God? We have no history of his experience. We could almost wish that we had, but since it is not recorded, it makes us feel that although men and women cannot tell us the way in which they were led to yield to Christ, yet if their lives *show* that they are serving God, we must be well content. If you are saved, even though you cannot tell us when or how the great change was worked, we will rejoice in the fact of your salvation! Amasiah is a man of whom we do not know anything beyond this—he

“willingly offered himself unto the Lord.” There must have been a turning point in his career—a time when first he knew the Grace of God which worked such a change in him. There must have been a waking up to the feeling that God deserved his love and his life. There must have been a time of quickening into spiritual consecration. We are told nothing about that—therefore we must leave it under the veil which Scripture draws over his history. But if I say little about his exercises of soul and press onward to a very practical point, I earnestly desire that the inward enlightenment that he enjoyed may be known by many of you—and that God, the Holy Spirit, may work upon your hearts and bring you out of the bondage and servitude of sin into the glorious liberty of the Gospel which will make you capable of willingly offering yourselves to the Lord!

I am here as a recruiting sergeant. I have no ribbons with me, nor shillings, but I cast a longing eye on many here present who, as yet, do not belong to my Master! And I fervently hope that they may be enlisted in His service. Often have I seen the recruiting sergeant lingering about certain streets and looking at every young man passing by. I have known him address some young gentleman who was amazed that he should ever have been spoken to him about such a thing—and who, in his offended dignity, felt a deal more inclined to kick the sergeant than to give him a civil answer! And the officer has said to him, “I beg your pardon, Sir, but I thought such a smart looking fellow as you would be just the kind of man to take the Queen’s shilling,” and, soothed by the compliment, the gentleman has gone on his way laughing. He wanted no Queen’s shilling and was not at all inclined for army service!

I would desire to be as bold in addressing you as the sergeant is in his calling. And if I should intrude upon some young gentleman who should feel angry because of my importunity, I shall not at all object. I shall say, “Very well, but you must excuse my feeling that the more ability and influence you have, the greater is the reason why you should be converted to Christ that you might serve my Master.” God knows how I rejoice over the poorest, the most ignorant, the most depraved of men or women when they are brought to Christ! But I do like, sometimes, to see those come to Him who have *some* life in them, *some* talent about them and who can, by consecrating themselves to the Lord, do for His cause and Kingdom, by His Grace, a real service in days to come! There is hard fighting to be done and my Lord calls for men who will not be afraid to do it! Let all the heroism of your manhood impel you to this blessed service. You are not asked to serve the Lord because He promises you ease and pleasure—you are, rather, called to “endure hardness” as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As we sang just now—

***“You that are men, now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.”***

I am going to use the account of this Amasiah, the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the Lord, as an illustration of what, I trust, will be true about many of my hearers. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may draw out somebody who shall become a very Apostle in these times! A standard-bearer for the Lord Jesus, who shall—

“Lift high His royal banner,”

among the sons of men!

I. First, let me say that Amasiah is distinguished from the other mighty men of King Jehoshaphat by the fact that HE MADE IT HIS LIFEWORK TO SERVE THE LORD. He “willingly offered himself to the Lord,” and he was accepted and became a life-long servant of Jehovah, the God of Israel!

It should not need much talk to make men feel that *this is reasonable service*. To serve your Maker, who created you that you should glorify Him, is surely a natural thing to do. And it becomes a thing to be more expected when you are asked to serve your Redeemer who shed His blood that you might be set free from sin and, “yield your members servants unto holiness.” Would it not be a right thing for you to offer yourself to Him who yielded Himself to the death for us?—

**“Offered was He, for greatest and the least;
Himself the Victim, and Himself the Priest.”**

This is an argument Amasiah had not, yet did he find reason enough to serve the Lord. How much stronger is the claim upon you! And if this plea needs to be strengthened still farther, think that you are called to serve Him with whom you hope to dwell forever in Heaven. It ought to be an instinct of every reasonable soul to set about such service instantly! Ordinary gratitude should cause every Christian to say to his Lord, “Whom else should I serve? I owe You my very being, my new life and all I possess. In You I live. By You I am daily fed. Why should I not serve You?”—

**“Yours am I by all ties,
But chiefly Yours
That through Your sacrifice
You, Lord, are mine.
By Your own cords of love, so sweetly wound
Around me, I to You am closely bound.”**

Moreover, *this is honorable service*. Men like a service that seems to reflect some kind of glory upon them. To serve a great man makes even the footman feel as if he were, himself, a great man, too—at least I have seen some of these gentlemen give themselves mighty airs under the notion that they were as grand as their master! But to serve God *really* gives honor and glory! O Sirs, if this is not done in mere pretense, but in reality, what a grand life a man must lead who is the servant of God! To serve Him whom angels serve, whom archangels serve—whose service is perfect freedom—is the most honorable service to which a man can attain! There is nothing humiliating or debasing about it, but everything that tends to lift us upward and to make us grow in spiritual force. To serve God is to reign! Every man becomes a king in proportion as he really serves the Lord!

Further, *this is remunerative service*, the most remunerative in all the world! The devil spoke a Truth of God that he did not mean to speak when he said, “Does Job serve God for nothing?” God never lets His servants serve Him for nothing! He may not always give them gold or worldly prosperity, but He will give them a reward more satisfying to them than these things—more grateful to their hearts than all the treasures of the Indies! I never met with a man that served God who complained of his wages. No, it is so much a work of Grace that the work, itself, is a gift to us. The privilege of serving God—yes, call it the high honor, the delight, the great

gain of being a servant of God—if there were no other reward, this would suffice us! I can sympathize with him who said—

***“Dismiss me not Your service, Lord,
But train me for Your will,
For even I, in fields so broad,
Some duties may fulfill.
And I will ask for no reward
Except to serve You still.”***

But the fact is that, in serving the Lord, we have, through Grace, “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We realize that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. “We know that all things work together for good” to us while we are here and that the best part of our religion is yet to come, for—

***“After death its joys shall be
Lasting as eternity.”***

He whose life is devoted to the service of God must have a blessed life! It is not always a happy life in the judgment of men, yet is it still happy in the judgment of God—and in the estimation of the Believer, himself! The servants of God have a happy service.

I may also say that *this is safe service*. God will not put you into a position of danger when you enter His service. If you serve men, they may tempt you to do wrong. Many a young man who has entered an office or a shop has found himself commanded to do what no honest man ought to expect another to do. Many a young woman has taken her position in a family where temptation has been like Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace to her. But if you serve God, He may try you, but He will never tempt you to sin. In following hard after Him, you will be in safe places, and the more you are obedient to the will of God, the more secure will you be from temptations within and without. Obedience will keep you from peril. The Grace of God will preserve you from all evil.

After all, I am not like that recruiting sergeant, who, if he tries to get a man to serve under the colors, has to put it very prettily. He tells about the merry times that soldiers have, but he does not say much about wounds and wooden legs. He does not talk much about bleeding to death on the battlefield, nor about being discharged, at last, with *nothing* a week to live upon after your best days have been given in your country’s service. No, he always picks out the bright colors and praises “Her Majesty’s Service” as if it were all pipe clay and red coats and fine feathers and glory and I know not what besides!

Now, I have not to do that. There is no fault in my Master’s service that I need to conceal from you! All round it is the best, the happiest, the most glorious position that a man can occupy! And though I would bid you count the cost before you enroll yourself under His leadership, you may rest assured that you can never calculate the value of the reward that Christ has in store for all His faithful followers! Therefore, without any reserve, I may fairly come to each man here and say, “Like Amasiah, the son of Zichri, offer yourself willingly to the Lord.”

II. Now, to go a step further, notice, in the second place, concerning this man Amasiah, HE WAS A READY VOLUNTEER “who willingly offered himself to the Lord.” There is much truth in the old proverb that “one vol-

unteer is worth 20 pressed men.” Service willingly rendered has a fragrance and a bloom about it that make it most delightful and acceptable!

He needed no pressing. Some of you need so much persuading that you are hardly worth having when, at last, we get you. There is such a thing as pressing a man so long that all the juice is gone out of him and you have only the husk of the man when you do manage to get him. Amasiah needed no pressing at all, for in his soul there was an ardent desire to serve the living God—he “willingly offered himself to the Lord.”

He needed no hunting out. How many, even of Church members, seem to be like Saul when he was elected king and they could not find him! “Where is that tall fellow, head and shoulders above the rest of the people?” At last somebody said that he had hidden himself among the stuff! Many of our young men, today, are among the stuff—and there are numbers both of men and women who ought to be coming forward for the Lord’s service instead of hiding among the rubbish! My dear friend, Mr. Pearce, the superintendent of our Sunday school, says that he needs more teachers. There are plenty who might engage in the work, but they are among the stuff! Let them imitate Amasiah, “who willingly offered himself to the Lord.”

Amasiah was a self-contained man. *He needed no looking after* when he had once come out. We have some Christians who will stay right as long as somebody else looks after them. How many such there are in all Churches! You must always be watching them or else they will be up to mischief, or growing cold, ceasing to attend the means of Grace, getting into evil company and going back to the world! Amasiah was not of that kind. He “offered himself willingly to the Lord” and, having done so, he stood to his consecration vow.

He needed no leader. On the contrary, he took the lead, himself, over 200,000 men! We have many that will follow pretty well. We need some that will not need leading except by our great Leader, the Lord Jesus—men who know what they know, believe what they believe, know how they ought to act and are resolved so to act—and will do it even to the end. It was a fine motto which a distinguished worker once adopted—“Resolved, that I will act as if there were no one else to act, not waiting for others.” This is the spirit which we long to see among the Lord’s people—not a spirit of lawlessness and disorder—but of loyalty and independence! A spirit which will not timidly wait until everybody is ready, but, knowing the will of God, will at all hazards go forward to do it!

Amasiah, the leader of this host of “mighty men of valor,” would be certain to be a man, himself, of valor! Like leader—like followers. He that would lead brave men must, himself, be brave! We need in this generation more men, who, in Christ’s service, shall perform deeds of daring as British soldiers do to win the Victoria Cross which has inscribed upon it the words, “For valor.” Christ has right royal rewards for those who faithfully serve Him. I should like to meet with a band of brave young men, ready to render valiant service to my Lord, young men with backbones—there have not been many of that kind made lately—they are, today, generally soft down the back. Most men I meet are very squeezable, men of India rubber that yields every way!

But we need for Christ and for His cause, some who cannot be turned aside to offer themselves willingly to the Lord, doing it decidedly, at once, and from the bottom of their hearts! God grant, by His Spirit, that some such may, by this sermon, be led to the knowledge and service of the Lord!

III. The third point about Amasiah is that, while he was a volunteer, HE OFFERED HIMSELF TO THE LORD. "*Himself*"—it was the best thing he had! Some of you, perhaps, have not anything else to offer. Then, do as he did—willingly offer yourself! I have heard of a little boy at a public meeting where there was a missionary collection. When the collector came to him, he asked him to hold the plate a little lower. Thinking he wanted to see his money drop on the plate and, being a kindly man, he held the plate down low. "Please, Sir, it is not low enough. Would you mind putting it on the floor?" The collector good-humoredly put it down and then the boy said, "I have not even a penny to give to the collection, so I want to get into the plate and give myself to God." It was a simple thing to do, but that is exactly what we desire that many may do at this good hour. Willingly offer yourselves, like Amasiah, to the Lord!

He made no reserve as to what he had. He gave himself, his money, his ability, his position, his influence. All was yielded up to the Lord. "Well," says one, "I give so much to the weekly offering." Do you? I am glad to hear it, but have you given *yourself*? "I sometimes go out and sing a sacred song at a meeting," you say. That is quite right—you give your *voice*—but have you given *yourself*? "I have joined the Church," another says. That, too, is a very proper thing to do if you are really a Believer. But it is not all, nor is it the first thing—you have given us the distinguished privilege of having your name written on our Church Roll—but have you given *yourself* to the Lord? It is said of Amasiah, that he "willingly offered *himself* to the Lord."

You have often found, I doubt not, a chrysalis. You have perhaps said, as you stooped to pick it up, "I will take that home and see what kind of butterfly comes out of it." You have kept it and kept it and nothing has ever come out of it because the butterfly had already flown away. Many people about us are like that. We hope that they are going to do something, but nothing ever comes out of our chrysalis! There is nothing living inside and, therefore, there is never any flutter of life, nor flight of wings. But when a man gives *himself* willingly to the Lord, making no reserve as to what he has, *then* we have something worth the having! I like to sing—

**"Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my Lord with zeal so great
That I should give Him all."**

Notice yet another thing about Amasiah, which, I think, must have been true—*he made no reserve as to what he did.* He gave himself to the Lord, as much as to say, "Lord, put me here and I will stay here. Put me there and I will stay there. Make me a great man and I will serve You. Make me a little man and I will serve You. Give me health and strength, and I will serve You. But if You choose, rather, to send me sickness and lay me on a bed of languishing, still I will serve You." In some such way I can fancy that Amasiah gave himself up to the service of the King of

Kings! This is how we should come willingly to Christ—when He says, “Go”—to go! When He says, “Come”—to come! When He says, “Do this”—to do it! We must be willing to do His will as the little girl said the angels do—“without asking any questions”—and thus numbering ourselves among the company who stand ready to obey their Master’s least word—

**“Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs but to do or die.”**

Christ must be the absolute Master of the saved soul—and the soul that is truly saved is willing either to go or stay as may seem best to his Lord. For it is to the Lord that he has given himself—to One who henceforth is to rule and reign over his whole life! I trust that some to whom these words come will thus offer themselves, making no reserve as to what they shall do, and—

**“Where duty calls or danger,
Be always wanting there.”**

When Amasiah willingly offered himself for the Lord’s service, *he made no reserve as to when it should be*. He probably gave himself to the Lord while he was a young man. He began with all his heart to serve God in his youth. And when he was in middle life and his children were round about him, he was still unfalteringly the servant of God. When he grew gray and others ventured to think that he had better retire from active service, he might think it wise to give up *some* of his work, but never would he retire from the service of his God, for he had willingly offered himself to the Lord! He made no reserve about serving up to a certain time and then stopping—but he would serve his God while he had breath in his body!

And *he made no reserve as to how that service should be rendered*. As I have already said, he would serve in health, but he would serve Him in sickness, too. Yes, and he would serve God by doing nothing at all, if such was His will. One of the hardest works for saints to do is to do nothing. When they get so infirm that they cannot leave their room, or even their bed—perhaps their very voice fails them so that they cannot speak—then what difficult work it is to say with the heart, “Lord, I served You when I labored for You, and I will serve You when I cannot labor for You. I trusted You when I could speak about You and I will trust You now that I cannot speak about You. I am Your servant. If my Lord bids me do anything, I will do it. If He gives me no command, yet I will still be His servant. In life and in death my ear shall be bored to my Master’s doorpost!” In this fashion, I suppose, Amasiah willingly offered himself to the Lord. Have you not sometimes seen the telegraph boys, standing or sitting still at the Post Office when there is no message to be delivered? They are as much doing their work by *waiting* as when they carry to its destination the dispatch which has been flashed along the wires! In waiting they serve and, in like manner, they most truly serve the Lord who give up all idea of self-pleasing and, go or stay, as best pleases Him, to whom they willingly offer themselves to be His servants.

I have been explaining what kind of volunteers I want to enlist for my Lord. I wonder whether the Holy Spirit is saying to some young man, “You are the man. You are the man. You should willingly offer yourself to the Lord,” or whether he is gently suggesting to some dear Sister, “You are the beloved of the Lord and may serve Him like Deborah or Dorcas if you will

but give yourself now." You remember how Zinzendorf was converted to Christ by seeing, at Düsseldorf, Stenburg's picture of Christ on the Cross, and at the bottom these words—

***"All this I did for thee.
What have you done for Me?"***

I pass on the question to you, though I cannot paint the picture or make you see the vision. If Christ has redeemed you, why, it follows, as a matter of course, that you will reckon that you are not your own, for you are bought with a price and, like Amasiah, you will willingly offer yourself to God! As you survey the wondrous Cross on which He died, you will surely be constrained to say with Dr. Watts—

***"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."***

IV. Now, I have a fourth observation to make which is important, though it may not seem so. When Amasiah willingly offered himself to the Lord, HE DID THIS IN A SECULAR CALLING.

He did not stipulate to be a Prophet. I do not know how it is, but when a certain type of young man gets it into his head that he will serve God, the next thing is that he wants to see me about how he can get into the *ministry*. Perhaps I look at him and I see that his mouth was never made for preaching. You can see by the appearance of his eyes that they were never made to look a congregation in the face. When he begins to talk, you can tell that he might *possibly* make a good student for the next 20 years and then, perhaps, he would be able to teach a class of boys—but the boys would soon be tired of him, for they would probably find out, even then, that they knew as much as he did.

Some have no gift for instructing others, but that need not hinder them from serving Christ as they can. Remember, Amasiah did not say, "Lord, I will give myself to You if You will let me be a Prophet." No! He willingly offered himself to the Lord to be what the *Lord would have him to be*—and so he remained a soldier. He was in the army and never went to any college and never preached a sermon in his life—but he "willingly offered himself to the Lord." You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord and go and keep a shop, selling articles unadulterated—sixteen ounces to the pound and 12 to the dozen—unless you make it thirteen! You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord and be a shoemaker—there have been consecrated cobblers before now, as both Sunday schools and foreign missions can testify! You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord, even though your daily calling is that of a chimney-sweep—that is a very necessary business and though your face may become blackened in it—your heart may be clean all the time!

You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord and be breaking stones on the roads, praying your Master, all the while, to break stony hearts. There is no lawful occupation in which a man cannot thoroughly serve the Lord! It is a great privilege and blessing to be set apart to the work of winning souls, but we must never separate that work from all the rest of the callings of life as though it, alone, were sacred, and all the rest were secular and almost sinful! Serve God where you are! Good Woman, go on looking after those dear children now that your husband has been called Home—

you will be serving God by bringing up those boys and girls in the knowledge of Christ—God help you to do it! Go on, dear Daughter, helping Mother. You need not aspire to be shaking a kingdom—shake the bed, well, tomorrow morning! There are many persons who have some very exalted ideas in their heads about who will serve God best by just doing commonplace work in a commonplace way—and will probably never be permitted to do anything else—at least that will be the case until they step down from their stilts and get rid of their lofty notions.

Yet it cannot have been very easy for Amasiah to live wholly to God as a soldier. *His was a difficult calling*, though, I suppose, in his days it was not so difficult as it is now. But he did it, whether his occupation was difficult or not. Wherever your lot is cast, abide in your calling and glorify God in it, as this man did! “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant.” Even if your lot is cast in the barracks, be bold to confess your Master! Many a man has become a soldier of Christ by seeing his comrade in the regiment kneel down and pray. With the memory of many a hero, both in the army and out of it, we may be certain that however difficult the place, the Grace of God is sufficient for us as it was for Amasiah.

Not only did he serve the Lord in this hard place, but *he rose to eminence in it*. I do not know how he began. When I saw him last—that is, when I last looked at my text—he was the commander of 200,000 mighty men of valor! A fine position that! He had become one of the five great generals of Jehoshaphat’s army. Where he began, I cannot tell, but it is quite certain that, in fearing God, he was not hindered in his promotion. The man who fears God need not be hindered one whit in rising in the world! That is to say, if it is worthwhile rising in the world, for there are some kinds of elevation so disgraceful that they are better shunned than sought! It is, in many cases, a great thing for a man to be kept down. A good doctor of divinity, whom I well knew, met a Christian man in the street, shook hands with him and congratulated him. The man said, “I do not know, Dr. Jeter, why you congratulate me, for I have had a world of trouble. In fact, I have failed in my business.” To which the good doctor replied, “I congratulate you because you failed *honestly*—you are the only man that I have seen for years who has done that.” Then he shook hands with him again and said, “My dear fellow, I do thank God that you failed *honestly*.” But no man need fail because he serves God. No man need stick in the mud forever because he becomes a Christian, for, “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”

Yet another thing we may venture to say of Amasiah. *He left an honorable record*. Here is a man in Jehoshaphat’s army who willingly offers himself to the Lord and rises to be commander of 200,000 mighty men of valor. It reminds me of Havelock and his saints in the Indian Mutiny. There was a stern fight to be fought and the general said, “Send for Havelock and his saints”—and they soon accomplished the task! When you get men who thoroughly serve God in whatever position of life they are, they are terrible fellows! They will do the thing where others only talk about it, for God does help, even in the ordinary concerns of daily life, those that

put their trust in Him. They shall never be confounded. "The angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." They can say, "By You I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall." Moreover, "The memory of the just is blessed"—the footprints they leave behind them help others on in the blessed way. And when they fall asleep, they are among the blessed dead who "rest from their labors"—they could *not do that* if here they had been *idle*—"and their works do follow them."

I am still working away, you see, at my main point. I am wanting to get that fine young fellow into my Lord's army! I am praying God the Holy Spirit to influence men and women to say, "We will willingly offer ourselves to the Lord. We will serve Him with our whole heart and soul." God grant that it may be so!

V. I have done when I add these words—Amasiah not only served the Lord, but HE IS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS. Let us make the best application of the sermon by working it out in our own lives.

First of all, he is an example *to the young*. He was probably a young man when he "willingly offered himself to the Lord." Why wait to grow older in sin before entering the glorious service of Christ? The world has nothing that can satisfy your heart—turn from its folly and choose the nobler path! If you are only a child, still I appeal to you—the earlier you offer yourself to the Lord, the better will it be for all the future of your life!

Amasiah is an example, also, *to men of position*. He held a high office, but he "willingly offered himself to the Lord." Young man of fortune and rank, I have a message from the Lord for you! Offer yourself willingly to the Lord. As you would be saved by the precious blood of Christ and the Free Grace of God, come and lay yourself down at those dear feet that bled for your salvation—you know not what work the Lord has yet for you to do!

He is also an example *to men who are rising in the world*, for he was such. I speak to some of you who have not risen, yet, but are rising. You are doing well, as the world has it. God is prospering you. I would lay my hand upon your shoulder, young man, and say, "Since God is blessing you so, willingly offer yourself for His service. You know that you are not saved by the offering of yourself to Christ—you are saved by Christ offering Himself for you—a Sacrifice for sin. But if He has saved you, then come and offer yourself to the Lord! The children do not now cry for bread to you, as they used to do. No, thank God, those sad days are over with for you! The wife has not to wear rags, as once she did. God has been gracious to you and helped you on in the world and now, by the gratitude that you have for Him, ask yourself whether you cannot serve Him and may He, by His sweet love, bring you to do so!" My Lord ought to have you. Shall He not have you?

I recollect how Mr. Rowland Hill once held an auction over Lady Anne Erskine, who drove up in her carriage to the edge of the crowd while Mr. Hill was preaching. He said "Ah, I see Lady Anne Erskine." A careless, thoughtless woman she was, then, and he said, "There is a great contention about who shall have her! The world wants to have her. What will you give for her, O World? 'I will give her fame and name and pleasure!' And sin wants to have her. What will *you* give for her, O Sin? 'A few paltry

transient joys.' And Satan wants to have her. What will you give for her, Satan? 'And the price was very low.' At last Christ came along and He said, 'I give Myself for her. I give My life for her, My blood for her.'" And turning to Her Ladyship, Mr. Hill said, "You shall have her, my Lord Christ, if she does not object—My Lady, which shall it be?" he asked. And she bowed her head and said that she accepted Christ's offer and would be sold to Him, and be His forever.

I do not know how to pick anybody out, here, for auction, but I would sell some of you to my Master if I could, without money and without price, save that which He paid for you when He poured out His life on the accursed tree! Where are the volunteers? Perhaps it is some bright boy that I have to get for Christ; or some dear girl whom the Lord means to have now; or some of these young men. Never did anyone truly *offer* himself to the Lord without being accepted—no, your offer of yourself to the Lord proves that you are already His in the Covenant of His Grace! Oh, how happy are they who, in their youth, willingly offer themselves to God! But, indeed, my Lord will take into His service people of all ages, both sexes, all ranks and conditions! He cares not what your possessions may be, but, whatever they are, offer yourself and them to Him to whom they rightfully belong! He will take the poorest and weakest, but still, I would like to win for my Master some man in the very strength of his days, with ability to think and power to speak, who will now say, "I have found my vocation. God calls me to Christ to find salvation in His wounds and to be His servant. It shall be all my business here below to magnify His blessed name!" God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Chronicles 17; Romans 12.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—119 (SONG II), 674, 606.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Mr. Spurgeon's letter to the congregation at the Tabernacle will tell sermon readers how he is and also his plans for going away. He and Mrs. Spurgeon especially ask that no letters be sent to "Westwood" during their absence, as there will be no one there to answer them. All donations should be directed to the Secretary, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London. The work of the Book Fund, both as to receipts and grants, must absolutely cease while Mrs. Spurgeon is away from home.

October 18, 1891.

"TO MY BELOVED FLOCK AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE:

"Dear Friends—Since you all prayed for me so importunately, I would entreat you to praise with me most heartily. My stay by the sea has worked wonders. I feel a different man, altogether, and my doctor gives me hope that when I have received a solid building up, I shall not be much the worse for the terrific processes through which I have passed. 'O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together.' I am very, very weak, and restoration to strength must be expected to be gradual. The inevitable fall of the temperature is a great peril to me for several reasons

and, therefore, my medical friend wishes that I were away. I hope to leave on Monday, the 26th. Pray that I may safely perform the journey and Mrs. Spurgeon, also. 'A thousand miles is a serious word for such feeble folk!' The Lord will perfect that which concerns me and when I return to you in peace, we will hold a public thanksgiving and bless our healing Lord.

"I shall leave you in the hands of our God. As a Church of the living God, you are as 'a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.' Your love and unity and prayer and faith are known everywhere. Will these bear the further strain which will be put upon them by the absence and feebleness of the Pastor? I believe they will, but let each one see to it that the service with which he or she may be individually concerned is carried on with more than past efficiency. Souls must be saved and Jesus glorified whether the usual leader is present, or another, or no leader at all. The Lord hears my prayers for you, even as He has heard yours for me! I am far too feeble to make any public appearances, or I would come and plead that now, in the hour of your testing, you may be found as pure gold which fears not the continuance of the heat.

"I beg your co-operation with my brother and Mr. Stott and all the officers, in all the regular work and service of our Lord. I have called Dr. Pierson from America with the view of an advance all along the line. I was bearing the cause on my heart and thinking that as you had heard so many different men it might be well if, before my return, someone could be with you for a season—the same preacher for a time. No one suggested Dr. Pierson to me—it came from my heart and I think I was led of the Lord. This beloved Brother is the author of several powerful works on the side of the Truth of God and a man of burning missionary zeal. I have had the closest fellowship of heart with him as a champion of the faith. Long ago he said to me that he would give up every occupation to serve me and I believed him. I sat down and wrote him, but the remarkable fact is that *he had already written me*, so that the *next day I heard from him*, hinting that a time had come when his former offer might be renewed!

"I believe it is of the Lord. I am responsible for the action and I look not for blame, but for the manifest approval of my Lord. Let nothing flag! There may be some deficiencies to be made up on my return but let these be as light as possible. If friends took the seats there would be none. I am not going to burden myself with any care. I leave the flock with the Great Shepherd of the sheep and feel that you will be both led and fed. The Lord grant that whether I speak or am silent, rejoice or suffer, live or die, all may be to His Glory and the progress of His Gospel! I am now a debtor to all the churches and to all classes of society. The sympathy shown me every day almost breaks my heart with gratitude. What am I? One thing I know—I am your loving servant in Christ Jesus and the Lord's messenger to many souls who never saw me—but who have read the sermons. To you at the Tabernacle I am very near of kin. **GOD BLESS YOU!**

"Yours in our One Head,

C. H. SPURGEON."

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

THE SINGING ARMY

NO. 2923

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1905.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 23, 1876.

“And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord.”
2 Chronicles 20:4.

JERUSALEM was startled by sudden news. There had for a great while been quiet preparations made in the distant countries beyond Jordan. Upon its mountains, Edom had been getting ready—the workshops of Petra had been ringing with the hammer, the enemies of Israel had been beating their pruning hooks into spears and swords and they were now coming down in hordes. There were three great nations and these were assisted by the odds and ends of all the nations round about so that a great company eager for plunder was drawn up in battle. They had heard about the riches of the temple at Jerusalem. They knew that the people of Judea had for years been flourishing and they were now coming to kill and to destroy and to sack and to plunder. They were like the grasshoppers or the locusts for multitude. What were the people of God to do? How were these poor Judeans to defend themselves? Their immediate resort was to their God. They do not appear to have looked up their armor and their swords with any particular anxiety. The fact was that the case was so altogether hopeless, as far as they were concerned, that it was no use looking to anything beneath the skies. And as they were driven from all manifest earthly resorts, they were compelled to lift up their eyes to God.

And their godly king Jehoshaphat aided them in so doing. A general fast was proclaimed and the preparation to meet the hosts of Moab, Ammon and Edom was prayer! No doubt if the Ammonites had heard of it, they would have laughed. Edom would have scoffed at it and Moab would have cursed those that made supplication. “What? Do they suppose that their prayers can defeat us?” would have been the sneer of their adversaries. Yet this was Israel’s artillery—this was their eighty-one ton gun! When it was ready, it would throw one bolt, and only one—and that would crush three nations at once! God’s people resorted only to the invisible arm—the arm Omnipotent—and they did well and wisely.

Now, if the Lord shall teach us to imitate them and, by His Grace, enable us in doing it, we shall have learned a great lesson! The preacher needs to learn it as much as anybody and he prays that each one of you may also be scholars in the School of Faith and become very proficient in the Divine art of prayer and praise!

I. First, then, HOW DID THEY ASK FOR HELP? They asked for their help, as you know, by a general fast and prayer. But I mean, what was the style of that prayer in which they approached the Lord?

And the reply is, first, *they asked for help, expressing their confidence.* “O Lord God of our fathers, are not You God in Heaven? And rule not You over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in Your hand is there not power and might so that none is able to withstand You?” If we begin by doubting, our prayer will limp. Faith is the tendon of Achilles and if that is cut, it is not possible for us to wrestle with God. But as long as we have that strong sinew, that mighty tendon unhurt, we can prevail with God in prayer. It is a rule of the Kingdom, though God often goes beyond it, “According to your faith be it done unto you.” I have known Him give us a hundred times as much as our faith, but, Brothers and Sisters, I have never known Him give us less! That could not possibly be. This is His *minimum* rule, I may say, “According to your faith be it unto you.” When, therefore, in time of trouble you ask help of God, ask it believing that He is able to give it! Ask it expecting that He will bestow it. Do not grieve the Spirit of God by unworthy doubts and mistrusts—these things will be like fiery arrows in your own soul and drink up the very life of your strength. However hard the struggle and difficult the trial, if you seek the Lord, seek Him in the confidence He deserves.

Then *they sought God, pleading His past acts.* This is a fashion of prayer which has been very common among the saints and it has proved to be very potent. “Are not You our God who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people, Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham, Your friend forever?” Remember what God has done for you and then say, as a sweet refrain, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.” When you are praying, recollect what He was yesterday if you cannot see that He is comfortable towards you today. If there are no present manifestations of Divine favor, recall the former days—the days of old—the years of the right hand of the Most High. He has been gracious to you—can you tell how gracious? He has abounded towards you in loving-kindness, tenderness and faithfulness—He has never been a wilderness or a land of drought unto you. Well, then, if in six troubles He has delivered you, will you not trust Him for seven? If you get to 60 troubles, cannot you trust Him for sixty-one? You have been carried, some of you, I see, till gray hairs are on your head. How long do you expect to live? Do you think you have got an odd 10 years left? Well, do you think that the Lord who has blessed you 70 years will not keep you the other ten? We say that we ought always to trust a man until he deceives us. We reckon a man honest till we find him otherwise. Let it be so with God, I beseech you! Since we have found Him good, faithful, true, kind, tender—let us not think harshly of Him now that we have come into strains, but let us come to Him thus and say, “Are not You our God? Did not You bring us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay? Did You not bring us up out of the Egypt of our sin? Surely You have not brought us into the wilderness to destroy us? Will You leave us now? True, we are unworthy, but we always were so and if You needed a reason for leaving us, You have had ten thousand reasons long ago! Lord,

do not be angry with Your servants—do not cast us away.” That is the style of pleading which prevails! Imitate these men of old who asked help by recalling the past.

Proceeding a little farther in their prayer, we see that *they pleaded the promise of God*, which promise was made at the time when Solomon dedicated the Temple. “That if when evil comes upon us, we cry unto You in our affliction, then You will hear and help.” He that gets the promise of God and grasps God with the promise—he does and must prevail. I have known a man sometimes unable to grasp anything—the object has slipped away, his hands have been slippery—and I have seen him as he has taken up some sand in his hands and then he has been able to get a grip. I like to plunge my hands into the promises—then I find myself able to grasp with a grip of determination the mighty faithfulness of God! An omnipotent plea with God is, “Do as You have said.” You know how a man nails you when he brings your very words before you. “There,” he says, “that is what you said you would do! Of your own free will you pledged yourself to do this.” Why then you cannot get away from it, for it is the way with the saints that if they swear to their own hurt they change not—they must be true to the words they speak even if it is to their own damage! Of the saints’ Master it is always true. Has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good? Here then is a mighty instrument to be used in prayer! “Lord, You have said this or that. You have said it, now do as You have said. You have said, ‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.’ You have said, ‘He shall deliver you in six troubles, and in seven there shall no evil touch you.’ You have said, ‘Surely in blessing I will bless you.’ You have said, ‘The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.’ You have said, ‘Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days so shall your strength be.’ Lord, there is Your promise for it.” With such a plea you must prevail with a faithful God!

Again, as these people asked for help, *they confessed their own unhappy condition*. There is a great power in that. One of the strongest pleas with generosity is the urgency of poverty. And one of the most prevailing arguments to be used in prayer with God is a truthful statement of our condition—a confession of our sad estate. So they said to the Lord these words, “O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: therefore our eyes are upon You.” They had no might and they had no plan. “We have no might, neither know we what to do.” Sometimes even if you cannot do the thing, it is a little comfort to know how it might be done if you had the power—but these perplexed people neither could do it, nor knew how to do it! They were nonplussed. A little nation like Judah, surrounded by these powerful enemies, truly had no might. Their weakness and ignorance were great pleas—the logic was Divine. “Neither know we what to do: therefore our eyes are upon You.” It was as if they had said, “If we could do it ourselves, well, You might very well say, ‘Go and do it. What did I give you the strength for, but that you could use the strength in doing it?’ But when we have no

strength and neither know we what to do, we come and just lay the case down at Your feet and say, "There it is—our eyes are upon You."

Perhaps you think that is not praying. I tell you it is the most powerful form of prayer, just to set your case before God, just to lay bare all your sorrow and all your needs and then say, "Lord, there it is." You know a man must not beg in the streets of London—the police will not have it—and I daresay that is a very wise regulation. But what does the needy man do? Have you not seen him? He is dressed like a countryman and looks half-starved. And his knees can be seen through an old pair of corduroys as he stoops. He does not beg, not he—he only sits down at the corner of the road. He knows quite well that the very sight of his condition is enough. There are one or two persons about the streets of London whose faces are a fortune to them—pale, thin and woebegone—they appeal more eloquently than words! I was going to say that there is a man who comes to the Tabernacle who is just of the same sort. I could point him out, but I do not see him now. But he does come here and the very way in which he shivers—the remarkable manner in which he looks ill, though he is not ill—takes in people who are continually being duped by his appearance! All the world knows that it is the look of the thing, the very appearance and show of sorrow that prevails with people more than any words that are used!

Now, when you cannot pray in words, go and lay bare your sorrow before God—just go and show your soul. Tell God what it is that burdens and distresses you and you will prevail with the bounteous heart of our God who is not moved by eloquence of words and oratory of tongue—but is swift to answer the true oratory, the true eloquence of real distress—and who is as wise to detect sham misery as to succor real sorrow!

I wonder whether I recall to some of you any particular times of trial? To myself I do. If I do not to you, at any rate, there is one common affliction which has overwhelmed us all—that is the great affliction of sin. When sin, with its multitudinous host of offenses, becomes manifest to us under conviction and we do not know how to meet one single sin or to answer one of a thousand of the charges that might be brought against us. When we feel that we have no might whatever and perhaps we realize that through sin we have brought ourselves into such peculiar circumstances that we do not know how to get out of it, though we feel that we must get out somehow. When we go to the right that seems blocked up and the left seems equally closed to us—when to go back we dare not or to go forward we cannot—then how wonderfully God clears the way! In what a marvelous manner we find our enemies all dead that we thought were going to kill us! And as for those that were going to rob us, we are enriched by them! Instead of taking us for a spoil, there they fall and their spoil becomes our right and we take it home with us rejoicing. Oh, what wonders God can do! He loves us to state the difficulty we are in, so that when He gets us out of it, we may remember that we were in such a condition! It was a real disaster and a time of real trial—and yet the Lord redeemed us from it.

What did they do after asking for help, after pleading the promise and confessing their condition? Why, *they expressed their confidence in God.*

They said, "Our eyes are upon You." What did they mean by that? They meant, "Lord, if help does come, it must come from You. We are looking to You for it. It cannot come from anywhere else, so we look to You. But we believe it will come. Men will not look for that which they know will not come. We feel sure it will come, but we do not know how, so we are looking. We do not know when, but we are looking. We do not know what You would have us do, but as the servant looks to her mistress, so are we looking to You, Lord. Lord, we are looking." That is a grand posture!

Do you not know that is the way you are saved—by looking unto Jesus? And that is the way you have got to be saved, all the way between here and Heaven. Whatever trouble comes, looking is to save you. Looking, often waiting, looking like the weary watcher from the tower when he wants to see the gray tints of the coming morning, when the night is long and he is weary, but still looking. "Our eyes are upon You." They are full of tears, but still they are upon You. They are getting hazy, too, with sleep, but still they are upon You—such eyes as we have. We do look to You." I have sometimes blessed the Lord that He has not said, "See Jesus—see Me and be saved." What He has said is, "Look." Sometimes if you cannot see you have done your part if you have looked—looked into the darkness. "Lord, that Cross of Yours, it would give me such joy if I could see it. I cannot quite see it—it looms very indistinctly on my gaze—but I do look." It is *looking*, you know, that saves, for as we look, the eyes get stronger and we are enlightened. And so in this case they looked and they found deliverance. God help us, Brothers and Sisters, to do the same!

That is how they asked for help.

II. Now, secondly, HOW DID THEY RECEIVE HELP?

Their help came to them, first, by a message from God. *They received a fresh assurance of God's goodness.* A new Prophet was raised up and he spoke with new words. "Be not afraid, not dismayed," he said, "by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's." Now, in our case, we shall not have a new promise—that would not be possible—

***"What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"***

But you will have that promise sweetly laid home to your soul and the Spirit of God will bear witness with that promise, and so strengthen and comfort you that you will get deliverance even before deliverance comes because it often happens that to be saved *from* the fear of the trouble is the main business! To be quieted, calmed and assured is really to be saved from the sting of trial. The trial itself is nothing if it does not bring a sting to your soul. If your heart is not troubled, then there is not much trouble in anything else. All the poverty and all the pain in the world would prevail nothing if the evil of it did not enter into the soul and vex it. So, in this emergency, God began to answer His people by quieting them. "Be not afraid nor dismayed, for the battle is not yours but God's: the Lord will be with you."

As that gracious promise calmed their fears so that they were able, without fear, to face the impending attack, *they then received distinct*

direction what to do on the morrow, which was to be the day of the assault. That direction was, “Go out to meet the foe.” How often has God given His people deliverance by quieting them as to their course of action. Already the step they have taken has delivered them before they know it. The Israelites, by then marching out to meet the foe—and marching out with songs and hosannas, as we shall see—were doing the best possible thing to rout their foes! As we have already said, there is no doubt that their enemies were unable to comprehend such a defense as this—they must have supposed that there was some treachery or ambush intended—and so they began to slay each other! And Israel had nothing to do but to keep on singing!

Then came the real Providence—*they received actual deliverance*. When the people of Judah came to their foes they found there were no foes. There they all lay dead! None of the men of might could raise their hands against those whom God had favored. After this fashion will God deliver you, Brothers and Sisters—in answer to prayer He will be your defense! Therefore, sing unto His name! Did not He deliver you thus when you went out to meet the great army of your sins? You saw that Christ had put them away and your heart danced within you as you said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for He has slain our sins and they can curse us no more.” So has it been with a great many troubles that have appeared to you to be overwhelming! When you have come to them, lo, they have disappeared! They have been cleared out of your way as you have advanced and you have had nothing to do but to sing and praise the name of the Lord!

III. And now, thirdly, and this is the main point, let us note HOW THEY ACTED AFTER THEY HAD PRAYED AND HEARD GOD’S VOICE. They asked for help and they had it! How did they then behave?

Well first, as soon as they had an assurance that God would deliver them, *they worshipped*. That is one of the intentions of trial—to revive in us the spirit of devotion and communion with God. And mercy, when it comes on the back of a great trouble, leads us sweetly to prayer. I guarantee you there had not been such a piece of worship in all Jerusalem as there was that day, when, after that young son of the Levites had stood and delivered the Word of the Lord, the king bowed his head and all the people bowed their heads and did homage to the God of Israel! You could have heard the sound even of the wind among the trees at the time, for they were as hushed and as quiet as you were just now. Oh, when you know the Lord means to deliver you, bow your head and just give Him the quiet, deep, solemn worship of your spirit! I do not suppose we shall ever fall into Quakers’ worship in our public assemblies, though an occasional experience of it would do you a world of good—to sit still before the Lord and to adore, and to adore, and to adore again and again, and still again, braces the spirit and clears the soul for the understanding of eternal realities! They worshipped, but why did they do it? They were not delivered. No, but they were *sure they were going to be delivered*. Their enemies were not dead. No, they were all alive, but they were sure *they would be dead*, so they had worship—and their devotion rose from trustful and grateful hearts! May we get into a

worshipping frame of mind and be kept in it. Then God will appear for our help.

As soon as the worship had closed, or rather before it had quite closed, *they began to praise*. As we read just now, up went the loud voices of the trained singers under the leadership of the chief musician and they praised the name of the Lord. They sang, as we do—

***“For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”***

That is the way you should deal with God. Before the deliverance comes, praise Him. Praise Him for what is coming! Adore Him for what He is going to do! No song is so sweet, I think, in the ear of God as the song of a man who blesses Him for “Grace he has not tasted yet”—for what he has not got, but what he is sure will come! The praise of gratitude for the past is sweet, but that praise is sweeter which adores God for the future in full confidence that it shall be well. Therefore, take down your harps from the willows, O you people, and praise you the name of the Lord, though the fig tree still does not blossom and the cattle still die in the stall and the sheep still perish from the folds—though there should be to you no income to meet your needs and you should be brought almost to necessity’s door—still bless the Lord whose mighty Providence cannot fail and shall not fail as long as there is one of His children to be provided for! Your song while you are still in distress will be sweet music to the ear of God!

After they had worshipped and sung, the next thing these people did was to act—*they went forth marching*. If there were unbelievers in Jerusalem, I know what they said. They stood at the gates and they said, “Well, this is foolishness! These Moabites and Ammonites are come to kill you and they will do it, but you might as well wait till they get here. You are just going to deliver yourselves up.” That would be the idea of unbelief and that is also what it sometimes seems to our little faith when we go and commit ourselves to God.” What? Are you going on your knees to confess your guilt before God and admit that you deserve to be lost? Are you going to withdraw every excuse and apology, every trust of your own and give yourself up, as it were, to destruction?” Yes, that is exactly what to do and it is the highest wisdom to do it! We are going out of the city marching away according to orders and if, as you say, we are to give ourselves up, so we will!

Perhaps, in your case, you are going to do an action of which everybody else says, “Well, now, that will be very foolish. You should be crafty. You should show a little cunning.” “No,” you say, “I cannot do other than I am bid. I must do the right.” Probably that will turn out to be the very best thing in the world to have done. The nearest way between any two points is by a straight line, the straightway will always be better than the crooked way! In the long run it is always so. Go right out, then, in the name of God! Meet your difficulties calmly and fairly. Do not have any plans or tricks, but just commit yourselves to God—that is the way by which you may in confidence expect to find deliverance. These people of old went out of the city.

But now, notice again, that as they went out, *they went out singing*. They sang before they left the city, sang as they left the city and when the adversary came in sight they began to sing again. The trumpet sounded and the harps rang out their notes and the minstrels again shouted for joy. And this was the song—

***“For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure!”***

It must have had a grand significance when they sang that passage, “To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever.” Why, every singer, as he sang those lines which look to us like a mere repetition, must have felt how applicable they were to their present condition when there was a Moabite and an Edomite and an Ammonite to be overthrown in the name of the mighty God whose mercy endures forever! So they kept on singing.

You will observe that while they were singing, God had worked the great deliverance for them. When the singing ceased, *they prepared to gather up the spoil*. What a different employment from what they expected! You can see them stripping the bodies, taking off the helmets of gold and the leg armor of brass—the jewels from the ears and from about the necks of the princes. They stripped the dead of their Babylonian garments and their wedges of gold. They heaped up the tents—the rich tents of the eastern nations—till they said to one another, “We know not what to do.” But the difficulty was different from what might have befallen them at the first. Then they did not know what to do because of their weakness in the presence of their foes—now the difficulty was because of the greatness of the spoil! “We cannot carry it home,” they would say to each other, “there is too much of it. It will take us days and days to stock away this wondrous booty!” Now, child of God, it shall be so with you also. I do not know how, but if you can only trust God and praise Him and go straight ahead, you shall see such wondrous things that you shall be utterly astonished!

Then what will you do? Why, you will at once again begin praising the Lord, for so did they. *They went back singing*. “They came back to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the House of the Lord.” When God has done great things for you and brought you through your present difficulty, you must be sure to repay Him in the courts of His House with your loudest music and your most exultant notes—blessing again and again the name of the Lord!

After that *they had rest*. In the narrative it is added, “So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.” His enemies were afraid to come and touch him anymore. After a very sharp storm it generally happens that there is long rest. So shall it be with all the Lord’s people. You will get through this trouble, Brother, and afterwards it will be smooth sailing for a very long time. I have known a child of God have a very cyclone—it has seemed as if he must be utterly destroyed. But after it was over there has not been a ripple of the calm of his life. People have envied him and wondered at his quietness! He had

had all his storms at once and when they were over he had come into smooth water that never seemed ruffled. Perhaps you will have the same experience—only ask the Great Pilot of the Galilean Lake to steer you safely through your tempest and then, when the storm shall cease at His bidding, you shall be glad because you are quiet—so will He bring you to your desired haven.

I have been desirous to speak these comfortable words to God's children, for well I know how they are tried. And I pray the Lord, the Comforter, to apply the word to their troubled hearts. But, I never can finish my discourse without having the very sad thought that there are always in our congregation some to whom these comfortable things do not belong. They are not Believers. They have never trusted in Christ. If this is so with you—if this is so—ah, Friend, you have to fight your own battles! You have to bear your own briars, you have to carry your own burdens. And when you come at the Last Great Day before the Judgment Seat, you will have to answer for your own sins and to bear your own punishment! God have mercy upon you and deliver you from such a condition as this. It is a bad condition to live in—it is a terrible condition to die in. May you be brought to receive Christ for your Substitute and your Surety, and glorify His name forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 20; PSALM 47.**

2 Chronicles 20:1-3. *It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There comes a great multitude against you from beyond the sea on this side of Syria; and, behold they are in Hazazon Tamar, which is En Gedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. An angry God is to be sought. Even though He smite us, we must turn to Him. It is from the hand that wields the rod that we are to expect deliverance, if it ever comes at all.*

4. *And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. The host of enemies were so enormous that they threatened to eat up all the land. The men of Judah could not keep them out. They would sack and storm and burn and destroy right and left. You see the great peril. What a heavy chastisement it must have been to the king to see his land thus in danger of being destroyed. But they had begun to pray.*

5-12. *And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the House of the LORD, before the new court, and said, O LORD God of our fathers, are not You God in Heaven? And rule not You over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in Your hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand You? Are not You our God who did drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham, Your friend forever? And they dwelt*

therein and have built You a sanctuary therein for Your name, saying, If, when evil comes upon us as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house and in Your Presence, (for Your name is in this house), and cry unto You in our affliction, then You will hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but You turned from them, and destroyed them not. Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon You. What a prayer it is! How argumentative! How it pleads his case as an advocate in a court of law, appealing to the mercy of God as logically as if it were to be argued out of the Divine heart. Oh, how good it would be if we learned to pray like this—in this earnest, importunate fashion! May the Lord teach us to pray as He taught His disciples!

13. *And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives and their children.* It must have been a wonderful sight—the vast crowd—the pleading king—his voice heard afar, and the men and the women. But to my mind, the most touching thing of all is the little children standing there, making their silent appeal to God that He would not let the babies be destroyed—that He would not suffer the young children to be slain by the cruel hosts that now threatened the land. Young children’s prayers are powerful. Little ones, may God teach you how to pray!

14. *Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation.* Perhaps he had never delivered a prophecy before. This is his first sermon, but the Spirit of God was with him and he could not hold his tongue.

15-17. *And he said, Hearken you, all Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat, Thus says the LORD unto You, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God’s. Tomorrow go you down against them: behold they come up by the cliff of Ziz and you shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Jerusalem. You shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand you still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem, fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.* Oh, how those words must have fallen on the weary ears of those who were in such trouble! And how glad those ears must have been to hear such a message of wondrous mercy and so near at hand, too! “Tomorrow.” Imminent danger brings eminent mercy and when the lion is about to leap upon his prey, then comes the lion slayer and breaks his teeth and delivers his lamb even from between his jaws! Glory be to God for such promises as He gives to His people in times of trouble, even such promises as He gave here.

18. *And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD,*

worshipping the LORD. What a sight! That is the kind of ritualism one likes—when the posture is suggested by the feelings—when the man feels that there is nothing else to do but to bow before the Lord! The king could not speak, he was too full of gratitude—too joyous at the thought that God had so appeared for him. And he felt that the only thing he could do was in silence to bow his head and prostrate himself before God. Have you not sometimes felt so full of gratitude that you could not express yourself?—

**“A sacred silence checks our songs
And praise sits silent on our tongues.”**

Now, while they were worshipping, and just as they had finished that silent adoration, the joy-strains were heard. They had taken a breath!

19. *And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.* Here, again, we seem to be carried by great waves of excitement and devotion. One moment we are sinking down in adoration, now all rising up to listen to the loud voice of God’s priests and Levites. But they have to wait for the morrow.

20, 21. *And they rose early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me O Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, Believe in the LORD your God, so shall you be established; believe His Prophets, so shall you prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say Praise the LORD; for His mercy endures forever.* So you can see them marching out of the city gate with the king at their head and, as they go out, the army is marching with banners and with songs and hosannas! This is their style of going out to meet the foe!

22, 23. *And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir which were come against Judah and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Mount Seir, everyone helped to destroy each other.* There were three or four nations and some jealousy or mistrust must have manifested itself. Or some mistake had been made and the motley host divided itself into self-destroying bands. The Israelites had nothing to do but to sing! Perhaps their very singing was the cause of that disruption among the bands. They could not make it out. They had seen the people rush to battle with discordant cries, but these were marching along as if they were coming to a wedding feast, singing hymns and chants. That was a new style of fighting. So the Moabites and the Ammonites thought that there must be something wrong. “Surely there must be some confederates in the camp,” they would say. They suspected each other, as bad men very soon do, and so they fell afoul of one another and spared the Israelites the trouble of killing them.

24-26. *And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude and, behold, they were dead*

bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called The Valley of Berachah unto this day. This is the Valley of Blessing—surely an appropriate name worthy of long remembrance!

27. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy. Another march of hosannas. What a wonderful sight it must have been! We have read of the Battle of the Spurs, but here is the Battle of the Song—the battle of praise! How wondrously it was won! Jehoshaphat is now in the forefront of those who go back singing. He feels he must sing the loudest who has had such signal mercy after his sin.

27-30. For the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the House of the LORD. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about. Now, it is a long piece we have read, but I think it would not be complete if I did not read you the song which they sang. In all probability it was the 47th Psalm. You can almost hear them singing it as they are marching back.

Psalm 47:1-9. O clap your hands all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible; He is a great king over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing you praises with understanding. God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the throne of His holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted. The delivered people give God all the glory. He reigns, and He it is who subdues the people. Let Him be exalted in the congregations of the people and praised in the assembly of the elders now and evermore!

—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.**

“GOODNESS, AS A MORNING CLOUD”

NO. 2365

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 17, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 25, 1888.**

**“And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the
LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.”
2 Chronicles 24:2.**

**“Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and
made obeisance to the king. Then the king listened to them.
And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers,
and served groves and idols: and wrath came
upon Judah and Jerusalem for this, their trespass.”
2 Chronicles 24:17, 18.**

THERE is a book called *The Museum of Natural History* and the most amazing animal in that museum is man. It would be far more easy to understand any other creature than to understand a human being. He is worthy of very great study and the more he is studied, the more will he surprise you. There are certain characters that are great curiosities. Alas, there are, also, other characters that are great monstrosities! You can never tell, from what a man is, what he will be. The case before us is a very extraordinary one because here is a man with every possible advantage who, through a number of years, exhibited the brightest form of character. And, yet, in the end, he was not thought worthy to be laid in the sepulchers of his fathers with others of the kings of Judah. Neither was he worthy of any royal interment, for the latter part of his life blackened and defiled the whole of his career and he who began his reign like the dawning of the day, ended it like the middle of the night.

I wonder whether there are any persons here who will turn out to be very sinful and wicked before life is over? I mean, those who have *begun* well, who are *now* the hope and joy of those who know them, but who will end badly, in dishonor to themselves and grief to their households? If there are such here, probably you can find them out by this one test. Those who say, “It is impossible that it should be so with us,” are probably the persons. While those who are afraid lest it *should* be so and ask for Grace that it may not be so, are probably those who will be preserved and whose path will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Dear Friends, what need there is to go below the surface in the examination of moral and spiritual character! I shall have to prove this to you, tonight, for in appearance, Joash was all that we could wish. Yet, had he really been what he seemed to be, he would have continued so! If there had been that work of Grace within his soul which there appeared to be in his life, he would not have turned aside as he did, for where a work of Grace is real and true, it is known by its abiding influence throughout

the whole of life. Where godly principles have been imparted and a Divine Life has been infused, these things are not taken from a man. “They went out from us, but they were not of us,” said the Apostle John, “for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” So was it with Joash. He turned aside from God because he had never truly known the Lord at all! And his last end was worse than the first because his beginning was really not such as it had seemed to be.

I trust that every person here desires to have genuine religion and not to have the sham. There is a prayer that I recommend to everyone as I desire to use it myself, “Lord, let me know the very worst of my case! Do not suffer me either to deceive myself, or to be deceived by others. If I am not Yours, let me know that I am not Yours. If my repentance is but a seeming repentance and my faith but the mere shadow of faith, and not the substance of it, Lord, by Your good Spirit convince me of my dangerous delusion and let me know where I am and what I am!” I am sure many of you desire to pray like that and, perhaps while I am speaking, that petition may be answered, especially in the case of some of our young friends.

I was very happy, last Sunday night, in preaching as I believe so as to suit the case of one young man of whom I knew but very little. Yet it seems that I described him so accurately that he felt that I was speaking especially to him. At the same time there was another young man, sitting in quite another part of the Tabernacle, who came in on Thursday to tell me how pointedly and distinctly I had described him. On Saturday I received a letter from the center of England, from a father who sent me his son’s letter saying that he was here and that I had looked at him, and distinctly and accurately described him. It is not always that we can hit three birds with one shot, but I have been praying that I may have still better success, tonight, and that many may feel, “The preacher is speaking of me. He is describing my character.” God grant that it may be so!

My first head will be taken from the first verse of our text—“Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.” This is my first division—*It is a great blessing when young people yield to godly influences.* The second division will be—*But this is not all that is needed.* And the third will be—*This yielding spirit may prove a source of mischief.* Instead of being a blessing, it will be a curse if it has not something more added to it.

I. First, then, IT IS A GREAT BLESSING WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE YIELD TO GODLY INFLUENCES.

Although Joash came of a bad family, yet he had a good aunt who was married to the High Priest, and the aunt and the uncle took care of young Joash. When he was but an infant, they stole him away so that Athaliah might not kill him with the rest of the royal seed. And thus Joash had this remarkable privilege that *for six years he lived in the Temple*—“He was, with them, hidden in the house of God six years.” That is a splendid beginning for any life, to be hidden in the house of God six years! I do not think we ever value enough those first six years of a child’s life. Impressions then made have a remarkable influence over the rest of life. Joash was where God’s praise was sung from day to day and

where holy prayer was perpetually offered. He was seldom beyond the fragrance of the perfumed incense, or away from the sight of the white-robed priests. He heard nothing that could defile him, but everything that could instruct and purify him. He was hidden in the house of the Lord so as not even to go out of it—concealed with godly people for the first six years of his life.

Perhaps, no, I am sure, some of you present had similar happiness. The first thing that you can remember is your mother taking you to a place of worship. You can never forget the time when Father, also, led you there, and did not seem to be happy unless his boy was trotting by his side when he went to hear the Gospel. Among our earliest recollections are the memories of holy hymns and the sayings of gracious people, in whom, as children, we took an interest when they came to our father's house. It is a grand thing that the first days of one's life should bear the impress of the Divine finger. It is well when the vessel begins to revolve upon the wheel and the clay is soft and plastic, that the first fingers that should touch and shape it should be the fingers of God's servants. God grant that they may be as the very finger of God upon our souls! Thus Joash began his career by being hidden in the house of the Lord six years.

After he was seven years of age, *he was started on his life's business in a very admirable way*. He was to be the king, but there had to be great care taken to sweep away the usurper from the throne and to put the little king upon it. Jehoiada managed the whole affair with great skill. He also drew up a Covenant for the king to sign, a Covenant with God that he would be obedient to Jehovah as the supreme King, and a Covenant with the people that he would rule according to equity and right, and not tyrannize over them. It was all done so well that no objection was ever taken to it and Joash reigned with great prosperity and happiness over a people who were blessed by his rule. Jehoiada, all the while, being his faithful prime minister and guide.

It is a grand thing to be started in life aright. It is half the battle, you know, to begin well. Some young men and some young women, too, are launched in life wrongly. It seems almost a matter of course that they should be too strongly tempted and, in all probability, yield to the temptation. But many of you were not started so—you began with a father's blessing and with a mother's prayers. You recollect your first going out into life. Some of us remember the ride on the coach when, early in the morning, we had to leave our father's house for the first time. Perhaps it was a cold and bitter frosty morning when we started in those old days to go across the country. We remember it well and how God cared for us and blessed us—and we desire to praise Him that He has preserved us even unto this day! I am showing you the bright side of Joash's career, first. After the six years in the house of God, he had a grand start in life with everything to his advantage. Alas, alas, alas, that, with such a bright beginning, he should come to such a sad end!

Notice, also, that being thus well started, *“Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.”* While that good man lived, the king was under his influence. He consulted him in every matter of importance. He even seems to have been guided by

him, to some extent, in the matter of his marriage. He was plastic under his uncle’s hands and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Mark you, not only that which was right in the sight of good people, but that which was right in the sight of the Lord! His life seems to have been at least outwardly obedient to the Law of Jehovah and he yielded himself up, apparently, at any rate, to be a loyal servant of the great King. And that he did, not for a short time, only, but all the days in which Jehoiada lived. Well, now, have we not known men and women whose lives have been under the benign influence of some kind elderly person—uncle or aunt, father or mother—and they have done what was right, year after year, as long as their godly relatives lived? They have been diligent in going up to God’s house, apparently devout in Bible reading and prayer, willing to assist in holy work in the Sunday school and all sorts of service for the Lord and, leading *outwardly* most useful, admirable lives all the time that these higher influences were over them, even as “Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest”?

Yes, and more than this, *he was zealous for the externals of religion*—“It came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord.” He actually chided Jehoiada, his uncle, because of the slowness of the Levites! “The king called for Jehoiada, the chief, and said to him, Why have you not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection?” Yes, and there are some whose hearts are not right towards God who, nevertheless, are very zealous about the externals of Divine worship. It is a much easier thing to build a temple for God than it is to *be* a temple for God. And it is a much more common thing for persons to show zeal in *repairing* temples than in reforming their own manners!

So this young man, you see, went even beyond his uncle in intense zeal for the cause of God, just as there are many, now, who, trained up in the ways of the Lord, are indefatigable in rendering some external service to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would give to the building of a Church. They would work hard to promote the paying for it and so forth, but, alas, you may give and you may work and you may attend to all the externals of religion, and yet have no part nor lot in the matter! Mr. Bunyan says that when he was an ungodly man, he yet had such a reverence for the outwards of religion that he would gladly have kissed the ground that the clergyman walked on—and every nail in the door of the Church seemed holy to him! That is all very fine, but unless there is a great deal more than that in us, we shall fall far short of the requirements of God!

All this while, *Joash influenced other people for good*. As king, he kept back the nation from the worship of idols. As king, he threw the cloak of his patronage over those who worshipped Jehovah—and things seemed to go well for years—“all the days of Jehoiada the priest.” As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash seemed to be all that he should be.

II. Now I am going to turn, for a few minutes, to the second point to show you that, good as all this is, IT IS NOT ALL THAT IS NEEDED.

For, mark you, *this is not yielding the heart to God*. “My son, give Me your heart,” says God. All that Joash had done was to give his heart to

Jehoiada, not to Jehovah! It is very easy to be outwardly religious by giving your heart to your mother, or your father, or your aunt, or your uncle, or some good person who helps you to do what is right. You are doing all this out of love to them, which is, at best, but a very secondary motive. God says, “My son, give *Me* your heart.” If your religion is taken up to please any creature, it is *not* the religion which pleases the Creator. Your homage is due, not to anyone here below, but to Him who sits in the heavens, whose Kingdom rules over all. Dear Christian friends, as you think yourselves to be because of the Christianity of your parents, I do beg you to remember that *true religion* must be a matter of your own heart and of your own soul. If you merely attend to it out of respect to the dearest and most precious person under Heaven, you do not reach the standard that the Lord has set up!

Note next, that *this yielding to godly influence may exist without any personal, vital godliness whatever*. You may meet with God’s people and yet not be one of God’s people! You may give attention to God’s servant and yet not be, yourself, God’s servant. A young man may yield to his mother’s advice and yet never be really repentant on account of sin. He may listen to his father’s words and pay respect to the externals of his father’s religion, but never have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must, yourselves, repent, and yourselves believe in Christ, or else all the rest will aggravate your sin by increasing your responsibility—and it will not go even a hair’s breadth towards your salvation! I would have every person here, whether young or old, examine himself to see whether his religion is vital to his own soul. Have you been born again? I enquire not now about your mother, or father, or friends! Have *you* been born again? Are you now condemned under sin, or are you justified by faith in Jesus Christ? There can be no proxies and no sponsors, here—every man must give account for himself to God—and each man, each woman, must come to the Savior, personally, and accept Him and be saved by Him, or else eternal ruin is certain!

I believe, also, dear Friends, that a character like that of Joash, a yielding character, *an externally pious character may even prevent men from being saved at all*. I mean you may take it for granted that you are saved, but you must not take anything for granted between God and your soul! I charge you to make sure work, here—take your wealth for granted if you like; take the title deeds of your estate for granted if you please—but between God and your soul, let everything be settled, straight, clear, sure and have no mistakes about this matter! It is so easy to have been under religious influence from our youth up and then to go on, year after year, never having raised the question whether we are Christians or not, saying to ourselves, “Of course it is all right.” You will be much nearer the Truth of God if you say, “Of course it is all *wrong*.” You will be much more likely to come to an honest conclusion if you rather suspect yourself too much than believe in yourself too much! I am sure that, in speaking thus, I am giving you sound teaching.

After all, to be under godly influences year after year, without any great trial or temptation, may leave *the personal character altogether undeveloped*. Some continually put children under restraint, never suffering them to have any sort of temptation. It is so with children, sometimes, in

large institutions—they have not any money and they cannot steal any because there is nobody else who has any—they are kept out of the world altogether! They live only among their own company and there is very much of prayer and everything that is good and often, when they go out into the world, those who have trained them are altogether disappointed with them, yet they need not very much wonder! If a person on dry land thinks he can swim, it is not certain that he will swim when he gets into the sea. We must have some kind of test, or else we cannot be sure of the character! We cannot know whether a child is honest or not if it never has any chance to take that which is not its own. You cannot be sure about principle being in any young man if he has been kept under a glass case—and if his principles have never been tried.

That was the condition of Joash—the real character of the man had never come out at all because Jehoiada, as it were, covered him. He was guided and influenced by the High Priest, but his own disposition only needed an opportunity of developing itself. I have heard of an officer in India who had brought up a young leopard. It was completely tamed. Apparently it was as tame as a cat and the officer had no fear of his leopard. It went up and down the stairs and entered into every room of his house. He never suspected, for a single moment, that it would be guilty of blood-shedding. Well, while he was asleep one afternoon, in his chair, the leopard licked his hand in all tenderness as a cat might have done. But after licking for a while, it licked too hard and a little blood began to flow. It no sooner tasted blood than the old leopard’s spirit was up and his master was his master no more! So does it happen to many that, by being shut in and tamed, as it were, but not *changed*—subdued but not *renewed*, kept in check but not *converted*—there has come a time when the taste of blood has called out the old nature and away the man has gone! You would never have thought that he could act as he did, but he did so because he had not a new nature! It was human nature held in check for a while, not the Spirit of God creating a new life and infusing a new character into the soul!

Do you see where I am coming to, dear Friends? I am speaking to those of you who have not passed from death unto life—to you who have never been renewed in the spirit of your mind. I pray you, do not imagine that *natural* religion is *spiritual* religion. Do not mistake the lessons learned at your mother’s knee for the teachings of the Holy Spirit! Do not confuse *a* change with *the* change—and do not think that *anything* that can come to you by your first birth can serve your turn without a second birth! “*You must be born again,*” or else, though you spent the first six years of your life in the house of God and though you were taught under the most hallowed influences, you only need an opportunity, a temptation, a peculiar stress laid upon you and you will go off where the old nature carries you—and you will find out for yourself and to the horror of others that all your early training had effected nothing because it stopped short of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

III. Now, in the third place, I wish to show you that THIS YIELDING CHARACTER MAY EVEN PROVE A SOURCE OF MISCHIEF.

We like young people to be obedient. We are very glad to have to do with those plastic characters that are readily shaped, but, at the same

time, we ought never to be too sure about them. A person with grit in his character, if really affected by the Grace of God, may turn out a far better man than your too plastic, pliable character. Oh, dear, how many we know who are very good, but there is nothing in them at all! We have known some others who were dreadfully difficult to manage and to get at, but when, at last, a change has been worked by Divine Grace, that very obstinacy and willfulness of theirs, when *sanctified*, has given a strength to their character and, instead of being a drawback, it has been a help!

This young Joash was exceedingly supple in the hand of Jehoiada, but alas, Jehoiada died. *Other counselors came and flattered Joash.* “Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah and made obeisance to the king.” Do you not see those gentlemen coming, bowing and scraping a hundred times before they get up to him? They “made obeisance to the king.” Jehoiada had not often made much obeisance to him. He had treated him with due respect as his king, but he had also spoken to him honestly and faithfully. Joash had somebody to look up to while Jehoiada lived, but now he found himself a great man with everybody looking up to *him!* And the princes of Judah, the fashionable part of the realm, the respectable people who never had been worshippers of Jehovah, but who had always preferred the more recondite, ritualistic and sensuous service of Baal, the philosophical god, came and bowed, and made obeisance to the king.

I think I can hear what they said—“Royal Sir, we congratulate you upon being released from leading strings. Now you can think for yourself! It is a fine thing for a young man to be delivered from the power of his old uncle—he was, no doubt, a very excellent person. We were present at his funeral and we paid him all due respect, still, he was a regular old fossil, one who never had made any progress at all. He clung to the worship of Jehovah and served the God of his fathers. Royal Sir, we congratulate you upon the liberty to which you have attained. Besides that, we fear that you have been considerably priest ridden. This Jehoiada was a priest and, of course, you respected and venerated his character, but you could not indulge yourself as long as he lived. We have always had high thoughts of you, Royal Sir. We always believed that you would break out, one of these days, and now that the good man is laid asleep, we are sure that you will not let his dead hands rest upon you, but you will wake up and be abreast of the age, and keep up with the spirit of the times!”

You know how they do it! It is always being done, this pouring of drops of poison into the ears—these soft, subtle flatteries. Even when a man has reached Joash’s age, he is not beyond the power of flattery. I wonder how old a man would be when he would be too old to love flattery. Of course, he always likes to be told, “Ah, dear Sir, I know that you could not bear flattery,” being, *at that moment*, more highly flattered than at any other time in his life! So these princes of Judah did and poor Joash, good Joash, Joash who repaired the Temple, Joash who was even more intensely earnest than Jehoiada, himself, was led astray by the soft words of the deceivers and we find him burying his religion with his uncle! In Jehoiada’s grave he buried all his piety. Some whom I have known, and over whom I have wept, have acted in the same way.

After that, *he went off to sin*. The images which he had broken down were set up, again. The groves which he had cut down were planted, again, and he who seemed so zealous a servant of Jehovah had now become a worshipper of the foul Ashtaroth and bowed before the accursed Baalim! Oh, sad, sad, sad mischief this! There was a lack of principle in Joash, and it is of that I want to warn all our friends. Do not, I pray you, be satisfied with the *practice* of piety without the *principles* of piety! It is not enough to have a correct creed—you must have a renewed heart! It is not sufficient to have an ornate ritual—you must have a holy life—and to be holy you must be renewed by the Holy Spirit! If this change is not worked in you by the Holy Spirit, you who yield so readily to good, will yield just as quickly to evil.

What happened next? *Joash refused reproof*. God sent Prophets to the people and they came and warned them, testifying against the idolaters—“But they would not give ear.” This Joash, who had spent his first six years in the Temple, now would not give ear to the Lord’s Prophets! He was always ready to listen to Jehoiada, but now he would not give ear. He was a tremendous zealot for repairing the Temple with most costly architecture and gold and silver without limit—but now he will not give heed to God’s servants at all! They may speak with all their heart and soul, but he is as the deaf adder that will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Yet he was once your good young man, your pious young man! Oh, what a sifter London has been to many like Joash! Many do I remember whose story was like this. They had been to the house of God always—they were brought up where there was a family altar in the house! Everybody reckoned them to be Christians when they came to London.

At first, they went where their father exhorted them to go, to some humble place where the Gospel was preached, but after a time they thought it was not wrong to go on Sunday to see one of the more showy religious places. That done, they went to some showy place that was *not* religious. They worked so hard all the week that they must go out a little into the fresh air on the Sunday and, by degrees, they found companions who led them, little by little, from the path of integrity and chastity till, “the good young man,” was as vile as any on the streets of London! And he who seemed to be a saint became not only a sinner, but the maker of sinners!

What did Joash do next? *He slew his friend’s son*. Old Jehoiada’s son, Zechariah, one of those who had helped to put the crown upon young Joash’s head, was, at last, moved to come out and speak in the midst of the Temple service to the people, as he had a right to do. And he began to upbraid them for turning aside from Jehovah to the worship of the foul idol gods. Now, look—the tiger’s blood is up! Joash bids them kill him! How dare he testify against his king? True, he is the son of his best friend—he is his own cousin, he is one who helped him to ascend the throne—but what matters all that to this once good young man? The milk of human kindness is now soured. The oil that was so soft burns fiercely when it once takes fire. “Let Zechariah die. Kill him in the Temple. Splatter the sacred altar with his blood! Stone him! He has dared to speak against me.”

See your soft clay—how hard and coarse, and rough it has become! I have seen this change come over men. I believe that the worst persecutors in the world are generally made of those who once were tender and soft-hearted. Nero would, at first, scarcely sign the death warrant of a criminal, and yet he lived to delight in wholesale murder! When the son of perdition was needed to betray his Lord, the raw material of the traitor was found in an Apostle! You cannot make an out-and-out bad man except from one who seems to be good. You must take the man who has been six years in the Temple, the man who has done that which is right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, to make such a devil as Joash turned out to be when he killed the son of his benefactor in the court of the house of the Lord! Oh, I could look steadily in the face of some here, tonight, and in the spirit of prophecy I could burst out into tears to think of what they will yet *be*, what they will yet *do* and what they will yet *say*! Perhaps you look at me and ask, “Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?” Oh, Sir, you are worse than a dog! There lurks within you a heart, “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?” Oh, that you did know it and would turn to God and say, “O Lord, renew me! Lord, make a new creature of me! Lord, save me, that I may never do such things as now, today, I think it impossible that I should ever do!”

This Joash, perishing, miserable, *having no faith in God, robbed the Temple* and gave all the gold and treasures to Hazael the Syrian. Personally, he was full of disease and, by-and-by, his own servants, disgusted with him for his conduct towards Jehoiada’s son, slew him on his bed. What a death for the young man who was six years hidden away in the house of the Lord! Oh, if I could tell some of you what will become of you, you would never come to this place, again, you would be so angry with me! If I could prophesy to some good young fellow here—I mean, *outwardly* good as Joash was at first, but without a new heart, without the Grace of God in his soul—if I could prophesy to him what he will be, he would spit in my face in indignation that I would dare to foretell such a thing! There is not a man or woman here who is safe from the most abominable sin until they yield themselves to Christ! There is not one of you who is sure that the deepest damnation of Hell will not be your portion unless you come and commit your soul into the hands of Jesus, who is a faithful Keeper of them that put their trust in Him!

Can there be a Character Insurance Society? There can be no such Society formed by men that can insure our character, yet God has formed one! “The righteous, also, shall hold on his way; and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” The Lord will keep him and preserve him from evil, for, “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” I earnestly entreat you, by the living God, my hopeful young Friend—yield yourself to Jesus Christ and seek His guardian care lest the fair blossom of today should never bring forth fruit, but end in disappointment.

The Lord grant that we may, all of us, meet in Heaven, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

2 Chronicles 24:1-25.

This chapter gives us the story of the reign of Joash. He was the only one of the royal seed who was preserved alive when Athaliah sought to destroy all the family of Ahaziah. He was hidden away for some six years in the Temple by his aunt Jehoshabeath, the wife of Jehoiada the High Priest, who arranged matters so well that when the child was seven years old, Jehoiada caused him to be crowned king and he put to death the cruel she-wolf Athaliah who had destroyed the royal family. You see, therefore, how much this young king owed to his uncle, the High Priest. Now let us read the story of his reign.

Verse 1. *Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem.* He might have reigned much longer had he not erred and turned aside from the right way, and so brought judgment upon himself.

1, 2. *His mother’s name was Bibiah of Beer-Sheba. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.* As long as his uncle lived, that truly devout statesman, as well as priest of the Lord, “Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.”

3, 4. *And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. And it came to pass after this.* Probably, some 23 years after—

4. *That Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.* Jehoiada had, with him, broken in pieces the images of Baal, and battered down the temples of the idols. And now the young king is “minded to repair the house of Jehovah.”

5. *And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, go out into the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not.* It is a great pity when those who live in the house of God have not enough interest in it to see to its repair. The fact was, the offerings presented at the Temple, like the tithes in modern times, were intended not only for the ministers, but for the maintaining of the fabric, too. But these priests and Levites would not allow anything to be deducted from their own income even for the repair of the house in which they served! So Joash ordained that special collections should be made for the purpose.

6-9. *And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why have you not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witnesses? For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the honor of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Daalim. And at the king’s commandment they made a chest, and set it outside at the gate of the house of the LORD. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the collection that Moses, the servant of God, laid upon Israel in the wilderness.* Everyone must give his half shekel by way of redemption money—and this had not been brought in.

10-14. *And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. Now it came to pass,*

that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the High Priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. This they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and, also such as worked iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD. So the workmen worked, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, of which were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the day of Jehoiada. See the influence of one man! One man can sway a state. One man can check sin. One man can be the head of a host who shall serve God and honor His name.

15. *But Jehoiada waxed old.* It happened to him as it must happen to us all, for the best of men must grow old and pass away. Let us value them while we have them. Too often we give them stones while they are alive, in anticipation of giving them bigger stones to keep them in memory when they die. “Jehoiada waxed old”—

15. *And was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.* An unusual age for that time. Short enough as compared with the years of the antediluvian Patriarchs, but still a great age for those days.

16. *And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward His house.* That is the best kind of good which begins with doing good toward God and then goes on to doing good towards God's house. The Church is to be served, but even it must be second to God's Glory. God, first, and then the very best must come next.

17. *Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king listened to them.* These flatterers came with all their daintiest manners and made obeisance to the king—and “the king listened to them.” All the days of Jehoiada, these princes had been afraid to set up the fashionable worship—the worship of Baalim that had been introduced by the Sidonian queen, Jezebel—that wicked woman of strong and masterful spirit. This worldly and false religion had been put down by the strong hand of Jehoiada, but when its adherents thought they had a chance to get to the front, again, they came and flattered the king. And “the king listened to them.”

18. *And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers and served groves and idols.* Or, “Asherah and idols.” The word is mistakenly translated, “groves.” These were certain horrible and disgusting emblems of the heathen goddess Ashtaroth, or Astarte—“They served Asherah and idols.”

18, 19. *And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this, their trespass. Yet He sent Prophets to them, to bring them, again, unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.* “These old

Puritans have come back again,” they said. “We will not listen to them.” The common people were still mostly worshippers of Jehovah, but the great ones of the earth had gone over to the idols. And they could not endure that one and another of the Prophets, often very humble and unlearned men, should come and bear testimony for Jehovah.

20. *And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus says God, “Why transgress you the Commandments of the Lord, that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you. He spoke very temperately and affectionately. The warning was faithful, but it was delivered in the very best and kindest spirit. But now see what the wicked men did.*

21. *And they conspired against him and stoned him with stones at the command of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. This is probably the Prophet to whom Christ alludes when He speaks of Zachariah, “whom you slew between the Temple and the altar.” It was a crime most foul to murder the son of Jehoiada, one of those who had helped to put the crown upon the head of the king! To do this evil deed in the court of God’s house, when the Prophet was engaged in his Master’s business and delivering a Divine message, was to heap sin upon sin!*

22, 23. *Then Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada, his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it. And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. God delayed not long the punishment of the evil-doers! When His servants are persecuted, He will speedily avenge His own elect. “They destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people.” Was not that remarkable? These were the authors of the sin and they had chiefly to endure the penalty. It is not always that invaders lay hold upon the princes, alone, and slay them—but these Syrians did so.*

24, 25. *For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hands because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases), his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada, the priest, and slew him on his bed and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchers of the kings. When one set of executioners had gone, his own servants conspired against him and slew him! Here ends our reading. May it be profitable to us!*

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JOTHAM'S PECULIAR HONOR

NO. 3063

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*“So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared
his ways before the Lord his God.”*
2 Chronicles 27:6.

THIS is a very singular expression which is used here concerning Jotham who is one of the kings of Judah who are commended as having done that which was right in the sight of the Lord. All of them had their faults, yet they were the best monarchs that sat upon the throne of Judah—and concerning Jotham it is mentioned as his peculiar honor that he “became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.”

I want to draw your attention to this ancient king and specially to point out to you, first, *the peculiar circumstances of Jotham's life*. Secondly, *the peculiar distinction of his character*. And then thirdly, *the peculiar honor of his career*. He “became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.”

I. So let us commence by considering THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF JOTHAM'S LIFE.

And to begin with, *he was the son of a good father* and I should suppose, from the mention of his mother here, of a good mother, too. This is a good beginning for a young man and yet, mark you, there are many who have been trained in the ways of godliness who have not continued to walk in them. How often does it seem as if children were dead set against the very things which their parents have loved and although one would almost have expected that they would have gone in the right way, yet since Divine Grace does not run in the blood, we have deplorable proofs of human depravity even in those who can trace a long line of Christian ancestry. However, it was no small advantage to Jotham that he had godly parents. But it would have been no permanent and eternal advantage to him—it would rather have involved him in greater responsibility without corresponding benefits if it could not also have been said of him that “he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.”

And note, next, that *he did not commit the great fault of his father, Uzziah*. Uzziah was a good man, an excellent man in many respects, but in his latter days, he conceived the idea that he would be a priest as well as a king and he therefore thrust himself into the place that was meant for only the priests. The priests, in great alarm, hastened into the Temple of the Lord where Uzziah had gone to burn incense upon the altar of

incense and vehemently protested against his intrusion into their holy office. He was very angry with them, but suddenly the deadly leprosy was white upon his brow, for God had smitten him for his daring intrusion—and the priests thrust him out of the Temple that he might no longer pollute the sanctuary of the Lord. “Yes,” we read, “he, himself, hurried also to go out because the Lord had smitten him.” Now, if a father—and especially a professedly godly father—has committed a great fault, it may be a temptation to his son to fall into the same evil. But in the case of Jotham, it was not so. He regarded his father's sin rather as a beacon to warn him away from that rock on which Uzziah's life had been wrecked—and so, when he was put upon the throne as regent for his father and Uzziah had to be shut up in a house apart as a leper who could not be allowed to mingle with his family and his subjects, Jotham took that as a daily lesson to himself and he walked the more carefully and humbly before God, preparing his ways as his father Uzziah had not done on that unfortunate, unhappy day when he went into the Temple to offer incense.

It is a great mercy for us when we have seen others sin, if we use their shipwrecks as beacons for ourselves. What fascination should there be in sin? When one bird sees another fall into a snare, we wonder that it should, itself, be so foolish as to fall into the snare that it can see. Yet we have known men who have seen the sins of their parents and the consequent sorrow, thereon, who have fallen into the same sins themselves! Dear Christian young people, if God has called you, by His Grace, and you have had professing Christian friends whose imperfections you could not help seeing, and seeing with sorrow, also, the evil effects of their wrong-doing—do not run into the same courses yourselves—but let the painful circumstances which have happened in your own family lead you the more carefully, like Jotham, to prepare your ways before the Lord your God!

Jotham also was *quite a young man when he came into the position of power*. For some years he occupied the place of his father, nominally holding the position of regent, yet really acting as the actual monarch. And now, at the age of twenty-five, we find him sitting upon the throne of Judah. How necessary it is, especially in young people, that the heart and the ways should be prepared before the Lord their God! Yet I retract the expression that it is “especially” necessary for young people to do this, for I have lived long enough to observe that the greatest faults that are ever committed by professedly Christians are not committed by young people. Most painful is it to me to remember that the worst cases of backsliding and apostasy that I have ever seen in this Church, have been by old men and middle-aged men—not by young people, for somehow or other, the young people, if they are truly taught of God, know their weakness and so they cry to God for help. But it often happens that more experienced people begin to think that they are not likely to fall into the faults and follies of the young. I care not how old a man may be—even if seven centuries had passed over his head—if he began to trust in himself, he would be a fool and soon he would have a

grievous fall! Yes, even if he had lived as long as Methuselah and all that while had been advancing in the Divine Life so that he could even fancy that he had reached perfection—the moment he thought so he would be in imminent danger! And the instant he began to think that he should never fall, he would be the very one, above all other men, who would be likely to fall into sin. They are the strongest who are the weakest in themselves. They are the richest who know how poor they are apart from God. They have the most Grace who know how utterly empty they would be of Grace if the Lord should ever withdraw His hand from giving it to them. Growing Christians think nothing of themselves, but full-grown Christians know themselves to be less than nothing.

Notwithstanding that there are peculiar dangers associated with youth and especially with youth placed in a prominent position, here was an instance of a young man and a king—and yet, for all that, a saint of the right kind—one who “prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” It must be a hard matter to be a king and to be a saint at the same time. The combination has very seldom occurred and when it has, it has been a prodigious triumph of Divine Grace. So young man, if God shall put you into a place of great responsibility where you will need much Grace to keep you from falling, ask Him for the necessary Grace and He will give it to you. Do not ask for an eminent position—let your prayer rather be, “Lead me not into temptation.” An eminent position always has a measure of temptation connected with it, so you are justified in praying to be preserved from it. Still, if the position is one which it is your duty to take, take it and trust to God's Grace to keep you there in safety. You are just as safe if God has put you on the cross of St. Paul's as you would be on the pavement below—quite as secure on the top of a mast as you would be in the cabin of the vessel if God, in His Providence, has called you to occupy that position! But, since there is, in itself, a great danger in the lofty pinnacle, you have the more reason to ask for the necessary Grace that you may carefully prepare your ways before the Lord—so that you may not bring the greater dishonor upon His name because of the prominence of the position you are called to occupy. King Jotham was a young man and a great man—yet, for all that, he was a saintly man.

Remember, also, that *he lived in very evil times*. The second verse of this chapter tells us that his own people, whom he had to govern, “did yet corruptly.” And the parallel passage, in 2 Kings 15:35, says that they “sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places.” Their king's good example was not sufficient to reclaim them from the iniquities in which they had so long indulged. It was a great thing for the nation to have a king who worshipped Jehovah, but it was a sad thing that the people still continued to practice their idolatrous rites in the high places which they were forbidden to do. It is not an easy thing for a man—even a king—to live above his surroundings. And all men are more or less the creatures of circumstances. They are influenced for good or evil by the people around them—and the most of them fashion their consciences according to the consciences of other people with whom they come in contact. Even

down to a few years ago, there were undoubtedly good men in America who did not think it wrong to buy and sell and hold slaves. The general conscience of the people around them was only up to that level and their own conscience was not sufficiently enlightened to lift them above their surroundings. They did not see that no man has a right to the labors of another man without adequate payment and that every man has a right to his own liberty. Their conscience had no more light than there was in those who lived around them. When a man lives in a feverish district, he must have a good sound constitution and be in vigorous health if he is not to feel some of the evil influence by which he is surrounded. If he does not actually take the fever, there is a feverishness, a lethargy and a condition of malaise about him which he would not have felt if he had been in a more healthful and bracing atmosphere.

Yet Jotham appears to have been, through Divine Grace, a man full of spiritual health although he lived in a land that was spiritually fever-stricken. He dwelt in the midst of people who were corrupt and yet was himself not corrupt, "because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." Some of you young people do not know much about this experience because you live, as it were, in a greenhouse with Christian parents and with the means of Divine Grace all around you. You are like plants in a conservatory—you ought to grow fast. But there are others here who know what the chilly atmosphere of the world means and who know only too well that after they have been communing with God a little while within these walls, they will have to go where they will hear the voice of blasphemy and profanity—and see a thousand things which grieve their spirits day by day and hour by hour. If that is the case with you, my Friends, you ought, above all else, to prepare your ways before the Lord your God! I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters, if your occupation takes you among ungodly men—and there are some lawful occupations that will call us where we shall certainly meet with little or nothing that will help us, but much that will hinder us—you must be careful, above all men, to keep a diligent watch upon yourselves and to prepare your ways before the Lord your God! Your Lord does not pray the Father to take you out of the world, but He does pray that He will keep you from the evil that is in the world. And in accordance with His prayer, it ought to be the great aim of your life that you may so live as not to be dragged down to the low level of ungodly men—yes, and not even down to the level of common Christianity—for the level of ordinary Christianity, at this day, far too closely resembles that of the Church in Laodicea which was so nauseous to the Lord. May you, Beloved, be a people separated unto God to walk in holiness before Him and to adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things! But if it is to be so with those of you who are placed in circumstances similar to those of Jotham, king of Judah, you must do as he did—you must prepare your ways before the Lord your God.

Once more, as Jotham's surroundings at home were bad, so they were a little further afield, for *the adjoining kingdom of Israel was utterly polluted with idolatry and all manner of evil*. And Jotham was obliged,

more or less, to feel the influence of that ungodly neighboring nation. Wherever he looked, he saw very few who prepared their ways before God. Every man went his own way and sought his own wealth or pleasure and oppressed the people around him. But Jotham, like—

**“the seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he—**

prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” Oh, that such Grace as that might be found in abundance in all Christians, that they might seek to walk in the right road in God's name—not running with the multitude to do evil, but choosing the straight and narrow way which leads unto life eternal with strong resolve determining, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, that let others do as they will, as for them and their house, they will serve the Lord and their ways shall be prepared before Him!

While there were so many unfavorable circumstances that might have been a hindrance to Jotham, there was one fact that must have been very helpful to him. *There were some notable Prophets living in Judah in his day.* Isaiah, Hosea and Micah must all have been well known to Jotham. Isaiah wrote the biography of his father Uzziah, for it is said, in the chapter before that from which our text is taken, “Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the Prophet, the son of Amoz, write.” Jotham therefore knew Isaiah and I should not wonder if it was one of the greatest helps to the growth of his spiritual life—to be able to talk with such a man so full of love and the Light of God, with such a clear foresight of the coming of Christ and such far-reaching visions of the Glory of the blessed Gospel day! I should not wonder if Jotham often got away from the people and got away from the court—and talked alone with this holy man of God. If he did, it was the natural means which God generally uses for the strengthening of His people. You will be wise, you young Christian professors, if you cultivate Christian companionship! Try to live with those who live with God and sit at the feet of these who sit at the feet of Christ. God may speak through them to your soul, so give heed to what they say—it may be that in giving heed to them, you will be listening to the voice of God Himself! If God does not lack a messenger to deliver His message, let not the messenger lack a hearer to receive the message! Rest assured that you will be most likely to grow in Grace when you are earnestly and zealously attending upon the ministry of the Word. The messages of the Lord's chosen Prophets probably greatly strengthened the good resolutions and the deep-seated principles of Jotham, and so helped him to prepare his ways before the Lord his God.

This must suffice concerning Jotham's circumstances—they are certainly instructive and suggestive to us.

II. Now, secondly we are to consider THE PECULIAR DISTINCTION OF JOTHAM'S CHARACTER. It is said that “he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.” What does that sentence mean?

Certainly it means, first, that he *resolved to do what God bade him.* He made God's Law, God's will, to be the rule that was to govern his life. He desired that what he did should be right in the sight of the Lord. He did

not trouble about being thought to be right by neighboring kings, nor was it his chief care to be thought to be right by the people over whom he ruled. He was not ambitious to be regarded as right by the heathen nations that were near him, but he did want to be right in the sight of God. He had selected as the rule by which he was to regulate his conduct, God's standard of right, equity, truth and righteousness. Jotham recognized Jehovah as being his God and he understood that he was bound to obey God—that the first objective of his life ought to be to please Him who first gave him life and who had continued to sustain him in life. It is a grand thing when a man comes to this decision—that the rule of his life shall be the will of God—that from that day forward, God the Holy Spirit, working in him to will and to do according to God's good pleasure, he will judge that to be right which God commands and that to be wrong which God forbids—and that all other rules shall only be rules to him in proportion as they stay in a line with this rule. And that whatever else may be the guide of others, though it may be a matter of custom, or prescription, or law, or example of the highest kind, he will not yield to it.

The worst of it is that there are so many who have a number of petty masters whom they try to serve. One says, "I would not do anything that is not customary to people in my position." Another says, (and this is a great thing with most men), "I should not like to be regarded as singular or unfashionable." Another asks, "What would society say?"—that wonderful tyrant of these latter days! Yet another says, "But my father always did as I am doing," thus putting his father in the place that ought to be occupied by his God. Another says, "But, you know, my practice is in accordance with the Council of such-and-such a Church." Or, "It is in accordance with the decisions of such-and-such a Synod"—as if Councils, or Synods, or anything else had any right to rule over us except in so far as their regulations are in harmony with the will of the Lord our God! It is grand to feel that you are free from all these fetters and that you can say, "O Lord, I am Your servant! You have loosed my bonds and no earthly or hellish power can now make my spirit bow down before it. Your will commands me, but no other will does. My knees bow before Your Omnipotent majesty. With awe and reverence I worship You and desire to be subservient in all things to Your great behests, O Jehovah. But as for these, Your creatures, what are they that I should fear them? Who are they—like the moths that swiftly pass away and the worms that soon perish—that I should tremble at their frown, or court their smile?" God said He, alone, should be the Christian's Master—and the rule of his conduct should be the will of the Lord as revealed in the teaching of this blessed Book. Happy will Christians be, and strong in the Lord will they become, when they get as far as that!

But that is not all—that is only the beginning! Jotham had set up the true standard. He desired to do what was right in the sight of the Lord. But the next thing was that *he realized God's Presence and so acted like a man who was living consciously in God's Presence.* According to the text, he "prepared his ways before the Lord his God." Beloved, do you

and I always realize God's Presence in this way? Suppose that at this very moment it flashed upon your mind that God was looking into your heart? Could you say that you are loving and thinking of such things as you would be glad to be loving and thinking of while you were conscious that God was looking upon you? Where have you been today? It is not my place to answer the question for you. Where have you been today? Have you been in such places that you would be glad for God to see you there? Have you been in such a frame of mind that you would be glad for God to see you in that frame of mind? Have you spoken to others in just that spirit and tone that you would like God to hear? He did hear it—remember He was there. But would you have done as you have done had you been fully conscious, as you ought to have been, that God was there? You know that you sometimes do things that you would not like others to see you doing and you are startled when somebody finds you so acting. But should it be so? Should it be so? Of course I do not mean that any of the ordinary work that any of us are doing is of that character—the work that we are doing about the house or in our business should not be a cause of shame to us. I suddenly came upon one of our friends the other day, just as she was whitening the front steps. "Oh, dear," she said, "Mr. Spurgeon, I am sorry you caught me doing this." "My good woman," I said, "I hope that when the Lord comes, He will find me at work about my proper duties just as I have found you. Never mind about your hands—they are as good to shake as ever they were! Let us go into the house and have a little talk together." There is nothing to be ashamed of or to blush at in such work as that! But I would be ashamed and expect others to blush if I found them cheating, or doing wrong in some other way, or idling their time away as some do. Ought we not to live as though we were expecting the Lord Jesus Christ to come any minute, or as if we knew, as we do know, that God sees us and knows all about us every moment?

But that is not all that we gather concerning Jotham's character. He had accepted the right standard and he had set that standard in the right light. But now he went still further, for *he was thoughtfully and carefully considerate*. I think that is the gist of the meaning of the expression, "He prepared his ways before the Lord his God." That is to say, he did not go and live in what I may call a careless, happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss, neck-or-nothing, over-head-and-heels kind of way of living as some people do! They rush with desperate haste at the battle of life and never seem to give time for thought as to due preparation for the great combat. When any good impulse is upon them, away they go, in the right direction, at such a speed that you would think they were very eminent and zealous saints! But perhaps tomorrow there will be an evil impulse upon them and they will go just as fast in the wrong direction! They are so easily influenced by outside circumstances that they are turned either way by those who have power over them—and they are as thoughtless for good as they are for evil. They are heedless and reckless—fine enthusiastic people in their way, but they lack solidity—

they are without permanent principles. Like Reuben, being unstable as water, they shall not excel. If a tailor is about to make a suit of clothes, he looks carefully at the cloth before he begins to cut it. But there are some people who seem to use scissors without any thought at all—they cut out their life-garment at a chance! When a man goes into a certain trade, if he hopes to do business, he lays out his plans with considerable forethought and considers his projects with all proper care. If he is to be a successful man of business, he must exercise forethought. And in the Christian life, we also need much forethought. There ought to be a mapping out of the day, a mapping out of the year—in fact, a mapping out of life, itself, and a serious thinking over every part of it. We would often do much better if we did nothing at all. We would frequently make the most progress if we stood quite still. Our common proverb is quite correct, “The more haste, the less speed.” It would be a wise plan for each one of us to pause a while, to put the hand to the brow and then to say, “Lord, let me hear a voice behind me saying, ‘This is the way; walk you in it.’”

We need to be led where the path seems most plain. Did not the children of Israel make a great mistake in the case of the Gibeonites because it seemed very clear that they must have come from a far country? We generally make our worst mistakes in matters which appear to us to be so plain that we think we do not need direction from God concerning them. If we waited upon God in what we regarded as plain and simple matters—if we made that our rule with regard to them—we would be more likely to do right in the more difficult matters. It would be something like the old proverb, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.” I mean that if we always took our simplicities to God, we would be quite sure to take our difficulties to Him. I suppose Jotham used, when he was considering a certain course of action, to consider whether he could glorify God by that course of action. And if he thought, he could not, he would not take it. And when there was proposed to him any mode of doing a certain thing which had to be done, he looked carefully to see whether it was God’s mode—and if it was not—he would not adopt that method of doing even the right thing, but would do the right thing in the right way.

But I think there is even more meaning than this in our text. In order to accomplish this preparation of his ways before the Lord his God, *Jotham must have been a man of prayer*. He could not have prepared his ways thus anywhere except at the Mercy Seat. He must have been in the habit of taking his daily troubles to his God and of seeking guidance from Him in his daily difficulties and of thanking Him for his daily mercies. He must have been in constant communion with his God or else he could not have ordered his ways aright before Him.

And I should also gather from our text that *Jotham was a very fearless, calm, collected, quiet-spirited man* who was not easily moved, for I find that the marginal reading is, “He established his ways before the Lord his God.” He was not fickle-minded, carried about by every wind that blew, but having prepared his heart to serve the Lord, God was

pleased to give him a steadiness of heart so that he was established in the right way. He could say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." And the marginal reading there is "prepared." "My heart is prepared, O God." Jotham was steadfast in the right way. What a grand thing it is, in our daily life, not to be so worried that we are almost driven to distraction and caused to do foolish things through unwise haste. And what a mercy it is to be kept calm and quiet in our daily walk before the Lord our God! O dear Friends, seek to be thus established before the Lord, so that whatever happens to you, your heart shall be so fixed that you shall not be afraid of evil tidings! You can never have power to move the world unless you have a fixed fulcrum for your lever. If your heart is fixed on God, you will be able to move the world, but the world will not be able to move you.

The real reason why Jotham's heart was prepared and established before God was because *his heart was right with God*. And how did his heart get to be right with God? Why, in the same way as yours and mine must—by being created anew! The heart of man, by nature, whether it is Jotham's heart or anybody else's, is a heart of stone. And God's Almighty Grace must make it a heart of flesh, or else a heart of stone it will always remain. If there is anything good in any man, it must have been placed there by a supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit. Job rightly said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Who can bring steadiness of heart out of an unstable heart like ours? Who can bring the preparation of our ways before God out of a heart that is, by nature, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? Jotham earned the commendation in our text because he had been the subject of Sovereign Grace and continued still to be so. And if you and I think that we can prepare our ways before the Lord our God without first resorting to the precious blood of Christ for cleansing—and to the Holy Spirit for the renewal of our nature—we shall make a very great mistake. The Lord must first work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure and then we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. But, not till He has thus worked in us can we work it out. [See Sermon #820, Volume 14—WORKING OUT WHAT IS WORKED IN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

III. Now, thirdly, we are to notice THE PECULIAR HONOR OF JOTHAM'S CAREER—"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

I should imagine, first, that he was *mighty in resolve*. It is a grand thing to have a man of resolves who has a high purpose before him and who means to accomplish it. That is the only man who is worthy to be called a man. As for that poor creature who looks like a man, but who has not any mind or will of his own—who has his ear pulled, first this way, and then that way, by whomever likes to pull it—what is the use of such a creature on the face of the earth? But Jotham was not a man of that kind. He sought counsel of the Lord to know what he ought to do. He judged honestly and carefully, in the sight of God, what was the right thing for him to do. And when he found that out, he put his foot down

and said, "That is the thing that I am going to do." It was no use for any of his subjects to say to him, "But perhaps that is not a prudent thing for you to do." He believed that to be right is to be truly prudent. It was no use for any of them to say to Jotham, "But this course of yours may involve us as well as you in serious trouble." He knew perfectly well that if right sometimes brings trouble, wrong always brings ten times as much! And whenever doing right does bring trouble, it ought to be the delight of the right-hearted to endure that trouble cheerfully. Jotham was strong in resolution, as a man has a right to be when he knows that his resolution is a right one. And that man who has prepared his heart and his ways with a single eye to God's Glory, resolving only to do the right thing whatever may happen, is the man who has a right to say, "I will," and "I shall." And he is the man who in the long run will be respected by his fellow men.

Having ordered his ways before the Lord, his God, Jotham had another sort of strength which is a very valuable one—*he was mighty in faith*. He felt this, "I have sincerely desired to glorify God and to walk in His ways and I am sure that God will carry me through." When he felt that it was right for him to fight the king of the Ammonites, he did fight him in no half-hearted manner because he felt that if God had bid him fight, God would surely give him the victory! He went to all his work relying upon God! And oh, how strong is the man who is mighty in faith! You know that you cannot have faith in God about a thing that you know is wrong. If you have ever so slight a suspicion that you are in the wrong, you cannot trust in God concerning it. It is like a little stone in your boot—it may not kill you, but you cannot walk with comfort as long as it is there. And a little question—even a very little one—as to whether you are in the right, cuts the sinews of your strength and you go limping along, if you can go at all. If I were speaking to you as a member of a church in which I did not quite believe. If I had to twist my message so as to make it fit the creed that I professed to hold, I would feel wretched. I would not get into such a position as that! I would sooner break stones upon the road any day. But where I feel that I have satisfied the requirements of my conscience in all points and that if I do err, I do not err willfully, or with my eyes open about it, then I can speak with confidence and say, "I know that this is right and that God will help me through with it. It does not at all matter to me what it involves. If it should bring me to poverty or suffering, or draw down upon my head misrepresentation and contempt, it does not matter an atom. Wisdom will be justified of all her children. God never did forsake the right, yet, and He never will—it must conquer in the long run." If the follower of the right and the true should have to suffer, it shall be a joy to him for he will thus be all the more a follower of his Lord and Master—and of all the true servants of his God who have gone before!

As Jotham was a mighty man in resolution and in faith, he also became *mighty in prayer*. You know that you cannot pray to God with power about a thing that you are not certain is right. It is no use for me to ask the Lord to help me in a matter in which there is something that

will grieve His Holy Spirit. It must be a case that I can confidently bring before God if I am to secure His help in it. I am sure that some trades people could not show the Lord their books. And if they cannot do so—and they are getting into difficulties—who can help them out of them? But when all is straight and honest, and the loss, whatever it may be, is caused by no fault of theirs, or when the accusation that is brought against them is nothing but slander, then they can present their petition to God with a clear conscience. And they may rest assured that He will hear them and grant their requests. A man becomes mighty in prayer, as well as in resolution and in faith, whose ways are prepared before the Lord his God.

And such a man also becomes *mighty in action*. He has not that guilty conscience which is the very essence of cowardice. He has gone before God as a sinner and confessed his guilt—and he has been washed in the precious blood of Jesus and cleansed from every stain. His heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit. And although he is not yet perfect, he is perfect in his intention to do the Lord's will! And feeling that he is right and that what he is doing is at God's bidding, he is a terrible man to oppose. He is such a man that no other shall be able to stand against him all the days of his life. He is of that seed royal that Haman will in vain seek to slay, for Haman will be hanged upon the gallows, but Mordecai will be in power in the palace! If a man has thus prepared his ways before the Lord his God, he will be mighty in all that he does and God will be with him.

And this, dear Friends, will make him *mighty against his foes* as Jotham was against the Ammonites. Oftentimes they will not even dare to attack him, for "when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." They will watch him and go around him, as Satan went around Job, but they will find scarcely anything that they can truthfully say against him. Or if they do oppose him, it will be of no use, for he will live them down if he does not overcome them in other ways. If they bark at him, he will let them bark, for he knows it is the nature of dogs to do so. And he will go on his way all the same, as the moon does when the dogs bark at her at night. She never pauses in her course, but goes shining on her way!

If a man's ways are prepared before the Lord his God, he will be mighty, not only against his foes, but he will also be *mighty in the midst of his own people*. Even though Jotham's subjects would not follow him in all respects, they respected him and loved him and made great lamentation over him when he died. Let me say to you young men, if you want to have influence over your fellows, do not take to flattering them—and never try to show them how great your talents are, or to make them believe you are somebody of importance. We have seen plenty of flashes in the pan, but the darkness has been just as great afterwards. Believe me, there is no building up of character except upon sound principles! And there is no building up of influence except upon good character. You must seek God helping you by His Spirit to prepare and establish your

ways before Him—and then such influence as you ought to have will come to you. When a man tells me that he is very good, I do not believe it. There are certain people, nowadays, who are writing, printing and talking in order to convince us that they are wonderfully holy. I used to think that some of them were so till they said it themselves! But ever since they have said it, I have gravely questioned whether it is true. If anyone whom I met always told me that he was rich—well, if I had dealings with him in business, I would want him to pay cash for everything. And when a person tells me that he is holy—well, I trust him as far as I can see him and not much further, for really holy men seldom say anything about their own holiness. They have no need to do so, for it always shows itself. Gold glitters quite enough of itself to show what it is, so there is no need for us to say, “That is gold.” You do not need to say of these lamps, “They are bright.” They say that for themselves by saying nothing, but simply shining.

I have been preaching to you about a very wonderful example of a gracious man. I wonder whether all here wish to be like he? I am afraid there are some of you who never try to prepare your ways at all. And as for preparing your ways before the Lord, that idea has never struck you. And yet, my dear Hearer, what can be so safe a way of living as to live in the love of God? And what can be more unhappy than for a man to be out of gear with the Omnipotent Creator—to feel every day you live that you are forgetting God and are ungrateful to Him—and that He is angry with you? I hope that this thought will strike some of you to the heart and make you miserable until all that is altered! And the way for it to be altered is for you to submit yourself to God by repentance and by looking to Jesus Christ by faith. May His Holy Spirit lead you to do so now, and then you will begin to live the happiest of lives, for you will be preparing your ways before the Lord your God.

May God bless you all for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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HOME QUESTION

NO. 294

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 15, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“But are there not with you, even with you,
sins against the Lord your God?”
2 Chronicles 28:10.***

THIS was a home stroke. When the children of Israel had bloodthirsty thoughts towards their Brethren of Judah, the Prophet very earnestly dissuaded them. “Why deal you so sternly with your Brethren who are in your power, simply because they have sinned. Smite them not too furiously, for are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?” How remarkably pertinent is such a question to different nations, to different sects, to different classes among men. We are too apt to look upon the sins of other nations and forget our own. Placed, as we imagine ourselves to be, in a pre-eminence in the midst of the peoples of the earth—we are continually criticizing the acts of other tribes and nations.

We look across the flood and we see that grand Republic, with the black stain of slavery upon its fair hand and we cry out against it with all our might. We look across the channel and we see a nation that we are continually charging with being volatile and frivolous. We cast our eyes to other peoples of the earth and we see crimes in them, all which we very readily condemn with iron tongue. It will always be well for the pride of Great Britain if she will question herself thus. Is there not with you, oh mistress of the seas—is there not with you a sin against the Lord our God?

Are we immaculate? Is our nation spotless? We have no slaves at home or abroad, but have we none who are oppressed and downtrodden? Are there none concerning whom it may be said that the hire of the laborer which is kept back cries out against them? Have we not drunkenness in our midst? Are we not, in fact, among the very chief of sinners, because as a nation we have received more Scripture light and more Divine favor than any other people among the race of men? God has dealt so well with us that our crimes assume a monstrous shape and vivid color when they are viewed in the light of His countenance.

Oh Britain, weep for your sons and daughters and bemoan their iniquity before the Lord, lest like Capernaum they sink to Hell amid the full flood of privileges disregarded. Instead of lifting up your hand to point at the faults of others, point at your own. Let us be content to sweep our own streets, to cleanse our own cities and make our own streams pure. Let our reformation begin at home, for we cannot hope that our remon-

strance against the sin of other nations can be powerful unless we have cleansed ourselves.

How applicable, too, is this question to the different sects, especially among Christians. How apt we all are to be plucking the mote from the eye of others. How very earnestly does the Dissenter exclaim against the sins of the Church of England and certainly they are neither few nor small. How anxiously does the man in the Church of England, who happens to have an uncharitable bias, observe the strifes and divisions that exist among the Dissenting bodice. And as for all the different denominations, how continually will they be pointing to unscriptural traits in the order of other Churches and how constantly do they forget their own infirmities. I hold that every Christian man is bound to give his honest testimony to every Truth of God he believes. We must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, because we may be charged with sectarianism. Every great man has been called a Sectarian in his time and every true man who stands up for the whole that God teaches, will necessarily incur that censure.

But let every Christian remember that our business is to deal first with ourselves. Let each denomination acknowledge its own faults and confess its own iniquities. I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung, as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all other sects. But I am equally clear as to our innumerable faults. Indeed, the sins and faults of our denomination may well go up against us to Heaven and withhold the dew of God's grace that we prosper not. I believe it to be the same with every other class of Christians and I would that whenever we are prone to rebuke our fellows too severely, we would pause and ask ourselves this question—"Are there not with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God?"

The like question may be continually reiterated in the ears of the different classes into which our commonwealth is divided. You see continually plastered on the walls—"Sermons to the Working Classes." The working classes might return the compliment by papering the walls with "Sermons to the Wealthy Classes," for if there are any that need preaching to, it is the rich. If there are any men, or any class of men, among whom the Gospel has its stronghold, it is just that order and class of persons who may be fairly ranked among the working classes. I do not believe in the intense need of the working classes for evangelization any more than any other class among men.

All class-preaching is, I take it, fundamentally wrong. We preach the Gospel to every creature and the Christian minister knows nothing of rich or poor, of young man or old man. The Gospel is to be preached every day to everybody. No doubt the intent is good, but I think the shape which it takes is calculated to raise up party prejudices and to arouse class feelings. We stand up and we say to all the classes, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What if the poor man has

his tavern and his house of drunkenness—what are the drinking parties of the rich? What? Is there no covered and concealed drunkenness hidden under the shadows of night?

What if the poor have a place where they meet for licentiousness? Is there no such licentiousness among the aristocracy? Do they not cast off those whom they have debauched and help to feed the stream of harlotry with the refuse of their lusts? Ah, my Brethren, it is not for the Christian minister to set one rank of men against another. We are alike guilty from the highest to the lowest. We have sins to confess and acknowledge and the Prophet of God must go through streets of this modern Nineveh and he must demand that king as well as commoner should repent. We have the same Gospel for all. “Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?”

But if the question is pertinent to nations, to sects, to classes, depend upon it, it is equally so to individuals. It is the nature of the Truth of God, like the crystal, that subdivide it as you may—every minute atom of it shall assume the same shape. Break up the Truth of God from nations to sects, or from nations to classes and it still holds true. Subdivide it, dash it into atoms of individuality and the same question is pertinent to each—“Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?”

I propose this morning, God helping me, to preach a very plain, faithful and honest sermon. I pray that it may come home to some of your hearts. You will find no smoothness about my speech but the very reverse. My sword may have a very mean hilt, but I do trust it shall have a very keen edge and that it shall cut sharp, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. I shall first of all put a home question. Secondly, I shall make a common sense enquiry and before I have done, I shall give you a little good advice.

I. First, then, I put A HOME QUESTION. Let me single out the persons and put the questions to them.

Doubtless I have here this morning, the moralist—the man who hates the very name of drunkenness. As for profanity, if he saw the seat of the scorner, he would pass by it at the remotest distance possible. He is a man whose hands are clean of all dishonesty. As far as he knows himself, he can say that he is upright in his business, that he is kind to his neighbors, that in everything he endeavors to keep the moral law. My friend has no *religion*, perhaps, but still he has the outward form of morality. Bring anywhere between the wind and his nobility the harlot, and oh, how disgusted he is! Let him but see one evening the drunkard rolling in the streets and no language can be too severe. As for the thief, he condemns him and condemns him rightly, too.

But one part of his condemnation arises from the fact that he feels himself without any guilt or accusation in this matter. He is innocent and therefore he feels that he may throw the first stone. My dear Friend, I am glad to see you here this morning. I wish that all men were as moral as

you are. I wish that all hated sin as much as you do. But still I have a question to ask of you, which perhaps you may not like, for you good moral people are very fond of your own righteousness. Let me ask you the question, "Is there not with you, even with you, some sin against the Lord your God?" Can you not remember any overt deed of wrong? Do you dare to tell me that you have never, never once broken a command of God?

Well, let it stand so, but have you never said an idle word and have you never read that for every idle word that man shall speak, the Lord shall bring him into judgment? Has your tongue always been as clean of every evil thing as God's Law requires it should be? What? Have you the matchless effrontery to say that? Do you think so well of yourself that you will declare that nothing has ever come out of your mouth but that which is good? Come then a little deeper, how about your thoughts? Remember, the thought of evil is sin. Have you never thought an evil thought, never desired an evil thing? Oh, Man, I will not compliment you thus—take down the Ten Commandments—read through the twentieth chapter of Exodus and read it through prayerfully and I think you will be compelled to say as you read each commandment through, "Lord have mercy upon me, for though I thought my life was good, I now discover that with me even with me, there is sin against God."

I do not condemn you for finding fault with the drunkard or the harlot, but I condemn you for this—that unless you are without fault yourself, you ought not to take up the first stone. You, too, live in a glass house, why throw stones at others? I wish you would turn your attention to yourself. Physician heal yourself, builder build your own wall, husbandman plow your own field and trim your own vines. What significance is it to you if other men are worse than yourself, will that save you? Look to yourself, I pray you, or else your morality shall be but the white winding sheet of your dead soul. Men may be as truly damned in morality as in immorality. Morality is good enough for what it is, but for the salvation of souls it is not sufficient. There must be a living faith in a dying Savior, there must be the Spirit of God indwelling in the soul or else you can never mount to Heaven. Oh remember, one sin will sink your soul lower than the lowest Hell. Repent therefore, O Moralist, and no longer rebuke others, but rebuke yourself.

I now turn to another individual, a very common personage, the accuser of the Brethren. I fear I have not a few here of that sort. I know I have some, but I fear they may be more than I think. Do you not know the man who, whenever he can, say a nasty thing of a Christian, will do it? He, who whatever a Christian man may do, will make mischief of it? He who is inclined at all times to be turning that which is good into evil—a man described by Spenser in his picture of Envy in the "Faerie Queene"? Envy, who always did chew between his dripping lips a toad, but "inwardly he chewed his own mouth"? Eating his own heart, spitting on everyone's good thing, imagining that every creature was as foul and as loathsome as himself? I have seen the dirty, mangy wretch, himself

abominable as Hell and daring to insinuate that all others were as deceitful and vile and filthy as himself.

This is when the evil has come to its full grown state. Such persons then become the most loathsome creatures in all society and the most despicable. Who is there that respects the wretch who has no respect for others—whose only life is to pull other men's characters to pieces and whose death would be sure to follow the universal reign of truth and goodness? I have seen, however, this disease before it has broken out and assumed its basest shape. I have seen men and women, too—let me lay a stress on that second word, for there is a stress sometimes needed there, though I would not be too severe—men and women who seem to have a propensity rather to observe that which is evil in another than that which is good.

Now, I will put this home question. My friend, it is all very well for you to have those eyes so sharp and to wear those magnifying glasses for other people, but “are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?” What about your own life? I will tell you something about it. Whatever you think of other people is true of yourself—that is an invariable rule. We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel and if you think you find other people's corn very gritty, the dirt was originally in your own. Depend upon it, that your judgment of others will be God's judgment of you, for with what measure you mete the same shall be measured to you again. Now, what good have you ever got in your life by finding fault with other people? I will tell you all the good you have got.

You have often been found fault with by others, you have been hated, you have been distrusted, you have lost many loves you might have received. You have sundered yourself from kind associations. And if you continue in your present course, you will be like the dreary iceberg that floats in the sea—always to be dreaded and avoided—chilling the atmosphere for miles around. A threat of destruction to the unwary mariner who happens to come into its neighborhood. No, more, if your calumnies have been directed against a servant of God, you have brought upon your head the most awful doom that can ever fall on man. “He that touches My people touches the apple of My eye,” says God. You have thrust your finger into the eye of God and what shall be the doom which you shall receive?

Tremble, Sinner, there is nothing that brings a man's wrath into his face like finding fault with his children. He will stand many an insult, but once touch his children and his spirit boils with indignation. And so touch the children of God, find fault with them and verily, verily, I say unto you, it were better for you that a millstone were about your neck and that you were cast into the depths of the sea, “Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?” I am afraid none will take this second passage home and the person who applies it to himself will be very angry. My dear Friend, excuse me for saying that is a matter which I shall not at all regret, for if you will but be angry with yourself, you may be as angry as you please with me.

And now for the third class. I have here the man who says, "Well, I have not been touched in either of those things. I hope I am something more than moral. I am religious also. You never see me absent from my place of worship. I am as punctual as a chronometer whenever the doors are open. I add to my morality that which is better still. I attend to ceremonies. There is not one which I have not observed. I have endeavored as far as I can to carry out every precept of the Christian ritual. I feel indignant with men who break the Sabbath. I feel angry with those who have no reverent regard for God's House."

My dear Friend, I do not condemn you for those feelings, but permit me to put to you a question. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" The preacher stands here this morning to make a personal confession. It not infrequently happens that in condemning others he condemns himself. And while that is a painful thing to him as a man, it is always a hopeful sign to him as a minister. Surely that which compels contrition and repentance in your pastor may possibly be profitable to you—to bring you, also, to repentance. There are, however, some outwardly religious people, who, when this question is put to them, imagine that certainly they have no sins whatever.

Ah, my dear Hearers, "if you say that you have no sin, you deceive yourselves and the truth is not in you." But if you answer this question sorrowfully, saying, "Alas, alas, I am not what I would be. I pray God to sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul and body," then I think there is a sign of life within. But if on the contrary, you reply, "No, I have no sin, I am perfect, I am complete through my ceremonial righteousness." Ah, my dear Hearer, you know not what spirit you are of. Though you have attended to the outward form—what is that unless you have received the spiritual grace? Though you have been constant at the place of worship, let me ask you—what is that unless you have brought your heart with you? Have you always heard as you would desire to hear if the sermon should be your last? Have you always prayed as you would desire to pray if you knew that rising from your knees you would have to lie down in your grave? Oh no, my Brothers and Sisters, we are too cold, too lukewarm, too chilled in our affections. We must mourn before God that with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God.

But again, I have to speak to a character of a very common kind. There is a man here who says, "Well, Sir, I make no profession of religion—do not think of doing such a thing. I hate hypocrisy of all things in the world. It is true, Sir, I commit a great many faults and am often very loose, but then you know everybody knows me. They can see my character at once. I never cheat anybody. I would not be a cant, to go up to a place of worship and then go on as some people do afterwards. I would not be taking the sacrament one day and then be grinding the poor on the morrow. No, for, I am as honest as possible and I have no doubt that when I stand before Almighty God I shall have as good a time of it as some of these professing Christians."

Well, my friend, I like honesty. There is something an Englishman always likes in an honest speech. But do you know I am inclined to think that there is a little hypocrisy about you? I think you are not quite as honest as you seem to be. For if I were to put some home and very pointed questions to you, I should not be surprised if you were to get very angry. Have you not heard of the monk who said what a miserable sinner he was and someone said, "Yes, that you are, there is no mistake about it." Then the monk grew wrath and demanded in a passion, "What do you know against me? I will not be insulted by you." And probably if I were to take you at your word and say to you, "Yes, that is just the fact, you are so bad a fellow as you can be," you would say, "I will not be insulted, even by a minister. Go along with you, Sir, what do you know about me?"

Your honesty is merely worn as a mask. Your conscience is uneasy and this is a pat on the back for it, a sort of lullaby to send it to sleep. But suppose you are honest, let me ask you what there is to boast of in your honesty? A man bounces into the prisoner's box before the Court and says, "My Lord Mayor, here I am as honest a man as can be. I am no hypocrite. I do not plead 'Not guilty,' for I am in the habit of stealing and committing larceny, felony, highway robbery and burglary." Now, is he not an honest man? Yes, with this little exception, that by his own confession he is a rogue. So is it with you, Sir. You say you are honest and yet on your own confession that very honesty which you plead is but a confession of your own abominable wickedness. And you imagine that when you stand before God, if you tell Him, "Lord, I never professed to love You, I never pretended to serve You," God will accept your impudence as *honesty*—that He will look upon your presumption as *sincerity*?

Why, Sir, you cannot mean what you say! You must have deceived yourself most terribly if you do. Your honesty in avowing yourself to be a slave of Satan! Your effrontery in declaring that you are steeped up to the very throat in sin—is this to be an apology for your sin? I now put this question to you. You say that you are no hypocrite and that you hate hypocrisy. Then I ask you, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What if you are no hypocrite—yet you are profane and you curse God to His face. What if you are not a deceiver, yet are you not a drunkard and a companion of adulterers? Ah, Sir, there are sins in your heart and loathsome ones, too. Your hardened acknowledgment that you are a sinner is of no value. That drunken braggadocio honesty of which you talk is of no value whatever. Get rid, I beseech you, of any hope or confidence that you may place in it.

And now if I have omitted one class, if there is one into whose heart the question has not penetrated, let me go round personally. I cannot do so literally. But let this finger range you all and let this eye look into every face. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" Answer it not for others, but for yourself, my Hearer. Give a reply from the depth of your own consciousness. And sitting in this hall, remember your own sin and make the silent confession of sin before God.

And O may He fulfill that promise—"He that confesses his sin and forsakes it shall find mercy."

II. Now I come to the second point, A COMMON SENSE QUESTION. They say that common sense is worth all the other senses put together. And methinks if men could but use common sense aright, it might be a fine thing for them in matters of religion. You know what Young says—"All men think all men mortal but themselves." We believe that all men will die, but somehow or other, we fancy we shall live. Now the question I shall put reminds me of that sentence. It is this, "Who are you that you think you shall escape the punishment of sin?" When the first question was put, you were compelled to confess that you had some guilt. Who are you that God should let you off and not punish you? Who are you that you should stand clear of the sins that you have committed?

All men think all men guilty but themselves. They think all men deserve to be punished. But every man has such a good excuse of his own iniquity, that he thinks surely, at the Last Day, he may hope to creep away without the curse. Now I put this common sense question—what is there about you that your sins should not be punished as well as the sins of any other man? Who has given you an exemption? What is there about you that you should walk about this earth and fancy your sins are nothing at all and that other persons sins are so tremendous? What fine gentleman are you that you fancy your pedigree to be so distinguished, that because the blood of counts and dukes and earls and princes and kings may happen to stain your veins, therefore you shall stand clear?

Of course the sins of the lower classes are dreadful—oh, so dreadful—but what is there about yours, my lord, that yours are so trivial? Surely if the poor man is to be punished, the equal law which stands for all and which Heaven will carry out, will not exempt you. Let me remind you, that so far from exempting, it may perhaps give you a double penalty, because your sin has led others into sin. And the prominence of your position, has been the means of spreading the pestilence of crime among others. I say to you, Sir, however great you may be—what can there be in that roll of honor that you receive among men that can in the least degree move the Lord your God? How He laughs at this princely blood. He knows that you were all made of earth as Adam was and that you all sprung from that gardener, that dishonest gardener, who of old lost his situation, because he would steal his Master's fruit. A pretty pedigree if you trace it up to its root! Oh, Sir, there is nothing in it whatever. I beseech you, remember your sins must be punished as well as those of the vagrant, pauper, criminal.

But make way for yonder gentleman. He imagines he is not to be punished because of his respectability. He has been such an honest tradesmen. Has he not been at the corner of the street since eighteen hundred and two? Has anyone heard that he failed and ran through the courts? Is he not respected by everybody? Well, Sir, and what do you think your respectability has to do with it? You have sinned, Sir, and you will be punished as surely as anybody else. Every iniquity shall have its just recom-

pense of reward. It will be in vain for you to plead your paltry respectability when you come up before the Throne of God.

You may wear all the stars and all the garters that man was ever befooled with. You may come before God and think that you can wear all the coronets, or all the glittering marks of respectability that ever man dreamt of. But these are nothing. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is and if your works are found evil, those works must be punished, unless you happily have found a Substitute through whom your sin can be put away.

What excuses men make on earth. I wish they would always make their excuses believing themselves standing before the judgment seat. My very honest Friend, over there, who said he got drunk and he did not mind saying that he was not a cant and a hypocrite. Ah, my Friend, you will not be likely to say that when the world is in a blaze, when the pillars of earth are reeling and the stars are falling like untimely figs. Then you will find that excuse shriveled up like a scroll. Will you not be afraid to come before God, you mere Moralist and tell him you have kept His Law? You, even now, know you have not and you shall know it better then, when your conscience has been quickened.

And you, Formalist, you may condemn others because you attend to every outward ceremony, but the day of judgment will make you feel that ceremonies are less than nothing. You will be compelled, then, to cry, "Rocks hide me. Mountains on me fall, to hide me from the face of that Lamb whom I despised while I trusted in the outward form and the empty ceremony." Oh, my Hearer, whoever you may be, if you have not been born again—if your faith is not fixed on Christ alone, you have no excuse whatever for your sin. You not only are guilty, be you who you may, but you are so guilty that you shall surely be punished for your trespasses. God will not give any exemption to you.

Ah, Mr. Accuser, you turn king's evidence on earth and so hope to escape the bar of man, but there are no king's evidences at the bar of God. You may accuse the Church then. You shall but the more swiftly be condemned. You may rail against your fellow men at the Last Great Day. Your words of railing shall but be a witness against you. Oh, my dear Hearer, if you are not in Christ, I would that I could so preach that you would begin to tremble. If Christ is not in you, your state is such that nothing but the Lord's mercy keeps you out of Hell a single moment. The wrath of God has gone out against you. You are condemned already because you have not believed in Christ. I want if I can, to draw this bow, not at a venture, but in such a way that the arrow will go home directly to the heart. "Repent and be converted, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." You have sins, repent of them, I beseech you. Bewail yourselves before God.

May His Spirit give you a mind for repentance and make you humble on account of Him. And then remember there is mercy for the contrite. There is pardon for the penitent. But to the man who hugs his sin, or seeks to cloak it, there is no pardon, no mercy, but the wrath of God

abides on him and the sword of Divine justice shall soon be plunged into his heart.

III. I come now, in conclusion, to give A LITTLE ADVICE. It shall be threefold. My first advice is, leave other people alone with regard to finding fault. My dear Sir, if you have been busying yourself with the faults of others, be so good as to cease from that occupation. I know a loathsome fly that can only live on the foulest food. I will not compare you to it, but if you ever want a resemblance, there is yourself to the life. You remind me, when I hear you talk against others, of those poor creatures dressed in rags with a bag on their backs. They who go through the streets picking up every stale bone and every piece of offal they can find. But their calling is honorable and they may possibly live by it, but yours is dishonorable, it is of no service to you or to anyone else.

There never perhaps was an age when men's characters were less safe than now. The best man that breathes beneath the sun may live to find some putrid wretch standing up to accuse him of crimes of which he never dreamed. I beseech you all, if you hear anything against any man, do not believe it till you see it. Liars nowadays are rife as wasps in summer. Hold off those black hands, you devilish Liar! O slanderer, have done with your filthy work. Rake no more in the kennel, lest you be sent to rake in the blazing kennel of Hell, there to find out the faults of others which like serpents shall be set to bite your own bosom and suck your soul's blood throughout eternity. Take heed, Slanderer, for there are hot coals of juniper and fiery irons awaiting the false tongue that lifts up itself against God and His people.

After that first piece of advice let me give another. Treat yourselves, my dear friends, as you have been accustomed to treat others. We get another man's character and tie it up to the halberds and out with our great whip and begin to lay it on with all our force—and after the flogging we wash the poor creature with a kind of briny pretense at excusing his sins. After that again we throw him back upon the bed of spikes of our own supposition that he is a great deal worse than we have made him out to be. Ah, just serve yourself so. Tie yourself up to the halberds, Man, and lay on the whip—do not spare him. When you have got yourself tied up, hit hard, Sir—it is a great rascal you are whipping. Never mind his flesh creeping, he deserves it all. Never mind though the white bones start from the raw red bleeding back—lay it on. Now then, a heavy blow! Kill him if you can—the sooner he is dead the better. For when he is once killed as to an idea of righteousness in himself, then he will begin to lead a new life and be a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Do not be afraid of whipping him, but when the cat-o'-nine-tails is heavy with clots of gore, rub the brine into his back, make it tingle. Tell him that his sins deserve the wrath of Hell. Make him feel that it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of our God, for He is a consuming fire. Then throw him down on the bed of spikes and make him sleep there if he can. Roll him on the spikes and tell him that bad as he is, he is worse by nature than by practice. Make him feel that the leprosy lies deep within.

Give him no rest. Treat him as cruelly as he could treat another. It would be only his deserts.

But who is this that I am telling you to treat so? Yourself, my Hearer, *yourself*. Be as severe as you can, but let the culprit be yourself. Put on the wig and sit upon the judgment seat. Read the king's commission. There is such a commission for you to be a judge. It says—Judge yourself—though it says judge not others. Put on, I say, your robes. Sit up there lord chief justice of the isle of man and then bring up the culprit. Make him stand at the bar. Accuse him. Plead against him. Condemn him. Say—“Take him away, jailer.” Find out the hardest punishment you can discover in the statute book and believe that he deserves it all. Be as severe as ever you can on yourself, even to the putting on the black cap and reading the sentence of death. When you have done this, you will be in a hopeful way for life, for he that condemns himself God absolves. He that stands self-convicted may look to Christ hanging on the Cross and see himself hanging there and see his sins forever put away by the sacrifice of Jesus on the tree.

The third piece of counsel, with which I am about to close, is this—my dear Hearer, with you there are sins and God must in justice punish you as well as others. I do beseech you look to the eternal interests of your own souls. I have hard work to plead this last point. May God the Holy Spirit take it in hand and it will be done to purpose. But if He does not do it, all I can say will fall with lifeless dullness upon your ear. As well preach to the dead in the grave as to the unawakened sinner—but yet I am commanded to preach to the dead—and therefore I do preach to the dead this morning.

My dear Hearer, look to your own soul's salvation. These are happy times. We are living just now in a period when the grace of God is manifesting itself in a singular manner. There is more prayer in London now than there has been in the last ten years. And I believe more outpouring of the Holy Spirit than some of us have ever known. Oh, I beseech you, look well for this auspicious gale. Now the wind is blowing, up with your sail! When the tide is coming in full, launch your boat and, oh, may God the Spirit bear you on towards life and happiness!

But, I beseech you, make your first object in life your own salvation. What is your shop compared with your soul? No, what is your body, your eyes, your senses, your reason, compared with your immortal soul? Let this word ring in your ears, Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! And, oh, I beseech you, look well to yourself lest eternity should become to you a sea without a shore, where fiery billows shall forever toss your wretched soul. Eternity! Eternity! And must I climb Your topless steeps and never find a summit? Must I plow Your pathless waters and never find a haven? 'Tis even so. Then grant me, God, that I may climb in eternity the mount of bliss and not the hill of woe. And may I sail across the sea of happiness and joy and not across the lake that burns with fire and brimstone!

Look to yourself, Sir. This is a day of good tidings for many, may it be a day of good tidings for you! I beseech you, give up thinking about men at

large, about the world and nations. What have you to do with politics? Let your politics be the politics of your own soul. Attend those other things by-and-by, but now give yourself the favor of your own thoughts. Begin at home. I do fear there are more lost through this than almost through any other cause, next to procrastination—thinking about others and forgetting about self. I wish I could put you today, in some respects, like those who are in the Chapel of the penitentiary, where every man sees the minister during service, but no man sees another.

My dear Hearer, remember that what I have said I mean for you, not for other people. Take it home. And today, I beseech you, go to your chamber and may God compel you by His grace to make a confession of your own sins. Seek a Savior for yourself. And oh may you find Him for yourself and then begin to seek Him for others. If this were a day of famine, would you be content to hear me say, “There is bread in abundance stored away in the Tower—there is a great quantity of food there”? No, you would say, “Let me go and get some of this bread for myself.” You would go home and the cries of your wife and children would compel you to action. You would say, “I hear there is bread, I must get it, for I cannot bear to see my wife and children starving.”

Oh, Sinner, hear the cry of your poor starving soul! Hear, I beseech you, the cry of your poor body. Your body does not wish to be cast into fire and your soul shrinks from the thought of everlasting torment. Hear, then, your own flesh and blood when it cries to you. Let your own nature speak. The voice of nature that dreads pain and torment and wrath to come—when it speaks, listen to it and come. Come I pray you, to penitence and to faith—

***“Come, guilty souls and flee away
To Christ and heal your wounds.
This is the glorious Gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds.”***

May God the Holy Spirit draw you, or drive you, whichever He pleases, so that you may be brought to life and peace and happiness and salvation through the precious blood of my Master, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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“THAT KING AHAZ”

NO. 2993

A SERMON
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*“And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet
more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.”
2 Chronicles 28:22.*

IT is absolutely certain, dear Friends, that whatever our personal characters may be, we shall have to know, by practical experience, the meaning of the word, “trouble.” Saint or sinner, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” The road to Heaven is rough and the path to Hell is not always smooth. There are some tribulations which belong especially to the people of God, yet it is also true that “many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” If a man, trying to escape from sorrow, should take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, he would find that sorrow was even there upon the sea! Should he go to the frozen regions of the North, he would find sorrow there, for there have some of the fondest human hopes been wrecked. Let him journey to the sultry South and trouble shall pursue him there, for plagues, fevers and disease haunt that region and the gates of death are near. Until we mount to Heaven, we shall never be able to escape from sorrow and sighing—only there shall we obtain joy and gladness, when our somber companions shall have fled away forever.

Since, dear Friends, the stream of sorrow is here, and we cannot make it flow in any other direction, what shall we do with it? Let us try to put it to profitable uses! Let us lift up our heart in prayer to God that all our sorrows may be sanctified—that, with all other things, they may work together for our lasting good—and that we, who are the children of God, may be perfected in the image of Christ according to the Divine Purpose. Let us remember, however, that sorrow will not of itself be beneficial to us. It is possible to endure afflictions on earth and afterwards to endure eternal damnation in Hell. Sinners may go from beds of languishing to beds of flame, from toil and poverty here, to torment and all despair hereafter. There is nothing at all in sorrow that can burn out sin—there is no power in human suffering to remove the wrath of God!

I. I shall commence my discourse with this very simple remark—IN THEIR TIMES OF DISTRESS, GOD’S PEOPLE HAVE OFTEN FOUND VERY GREAT PROFIT.

Suffering is one of the things which is written in the Covenant of Grace as a blessing. The rod was promised to us when we became the children of God and we cannot escape it. And I think the poet Cowper was right when he said that “the trueborn child of God” would not escape

it if he might. The distress of Believers, when it is sanctified to them, *loosens their hold upon this world*. Trials cut the ropes which fasten our souls to earthly things and so enable us to mount. They file the chains which, as on the eagle’s foot, will not let her spread her wings and soar upward toward the sun. Trouble, like a sharp spade, digs up the earth that is about our roots and then we bring forth more fruit. Were it not for the thorns in our nest, we would be so content with its soft lining that we would sit in it till we died. But the sharp thorns prick our breasts and then we turn our eyes aloft and learn to try our wings, ready for the time when they shall have fully grown and we shall mount to joys above!

Afflictions, also, are often to the benefit of Believers *in leading them to search for sin*. Our trials should be search warrants, sent to us from God that we may search and find out the secret evil that is within us—the offense that we have hidden, the lie that is in our right hand. You know, Beloved, that it is not an easy thing to bring us to self-examination. We are afraid of it—we are too apt to take things as they seem to be, without testing and trying them to see what they really are. But when the consolations of God grow small with us, then we say, “Is there any secret sin within us?” A rough wind blows through the forest and the rotten branches creak, and are torn from the oak, where otherwise they would have become a nest for all sorts of destructive insects and a center of decay for the whole tree. So, our afflictions often drive away some besetting sins, some darling propensities which otherwise we might have carried in our bosom till they had done us grievous damage.

Do you not also know, dear Friends, how *trials give new life to prayer*? Do we ever pray as well as when we feel the pricks of our Father’s sword? He never wounds us so severely as to kill us, but He does, sometimes, just gently probe us to wake us up from our lethargy. Oh, what fervent prayers we offer when in the furnace! And I may add, oh, what grateful songs we sing when we come out! There is more life, I think, in one’s piety in times of sorrow than at any other season. I do not wish to be laid aside from pulpit labor, but I must confess that I have often felt unusual spiritual power when coming up to preach to you after a season of sickness. And there have been times when I have heard some of you say, “Our minister speaks more sweetly, now, than he did before he was laid aside.” Yes, the olives must go into the press if the oil is to be squeezed out of them—and the grapes must be trod upon with loving feet before the wine flows forth from them. The file must be used upon us to bring out the true quality of the metal. There is no hope that we shall ever be made into much fine gold unless we are often put into the crucible—and unless that crucible is put into the midst of the glowing coals! So I say that we get much good from our trials.

Have you not also found, dear Friends, that *trials make your faith grow stronger*? We who are but striplings in the Lord’s army, enlist very readily. We put the colors in our cap and we think that we are going to do great things—to stir up the Church and to rout the world, the flesh and the devil! But we soon find that we have to be drilled by the black sergeant, Affliction, and afterwards we have to march out to the battle of the warrior, “with confused noise and garments rolled in blood.” And, by-

and-by, after many a conflict, we become hardened veterans and we who might have turned our backs before, if it had not been for trial, become bold as lions for the Lord our God! Brothers and Sisters, there is no teaching, no ministry, even of the best-taught servant of God, that can do you such good as sanctified experience! You must learn for yourselves—under that blessed schoolmaster, Mr. Affliction—you must study the sacred science of Divinity! It is good to go to his school, for the lessons to be learned there are so beneficial. One of his scholars wrote, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word.”

We also get *our sweetest comforts in the time of trouble*. Do not mothers often give their children, in their seasons of sickness, tokens of love that they never give them when in health? I know that there are kisses of Jesus’ lips for His tried children that He gives not to those who are without trial. “He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.” Then I would love to be a lamb, to ride so near to His heart—“and shall gently lead those that are with young,” and it is well for us, sometimes, to fake those pains and weaknesses that we may have more of the gentle leadings of the tender Shepherd! I think it was Rutherford who said that when Christ put him down in the cellar of affliction, he knew that He kept His wine there, and he groped about until he found the bottles—and then he drank and was revived! Ah, there is rich wine of comfort in the lowest cellars of affliction when Christ puts us down there! Even the joys of Heaven will be all the sweeter because of our experiences of trial here, where we often sing—

**“Sweet affliction
Thus to bring my Savior near.”**

Christ is superlatively sweet to us and the next sweetest thing in all the world is Christ’s dear Cross. He is, Himself, most precious, but next to the kisses of His lips are the blows—the love pats—of His pierced hands!

II. Now I advance another step and remind you that VERY OFTEN, THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD, UNGODLY PERSONS HAVE HAD REASON TO BLESS THE LORD FOR THEIR AFFLICTIONS.

Not infrequently have I heard a story of this kind from a man who has passed the prime of life, whose garments bear evidence, though he still looks respectable, that he is one who has seen many sorrows and trials—and who carries on his brow the marks of the plowshare of grief. He has come to unite in fellowship with the Church and he begins telling the story of his conversion, which is something like this—“I was once a flourishing tradesman. I had a large business and was a wealthy man, but, alas, I was foolish. Worse than that, I was wicked. I misspent my time, I delighted in the ways of sin and became a profligate. My companions thought me generous and I did not wish to be less than they thought me to be, so I wasted my substance in riotous living. My business suffered and, at last, there came a crash. All I had went where all must go when a man squanders his time and money as I squandered mine. I became poor. I had not previously known what it was to eat the bread of dependence, but I did eat it for a few months. Friends assisted me for a time, but they grew tired of doing so and I was cast off by the world. And I felt, when any looked coldly upon me, that I deserved it. I

have been a fool, Sir, I know that I have. But it was then, one cold, pitiless night, when there was only one place where I could find shelter for my head—that place was the pauper's last refuge—it was then that I thought upon my ways and lifted my eyes to Heaven and breathed the prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The man has told me that he blesses God for his poverty, for that was the means of bringing him to Christ! And since he has come to know the Lord, he has thought it a thousand mercies that he was thus brought very low, for if he had not been, his proud spirit would never have been broken and he would never have been humbled before the Lord.

And some of you, my Sisters, know that you have told me and the Church your story. You were happy mothers in your households, but you feared not the Lord. You had your children around you and you and your husband took what you called, "your pleasure," on the Sabbath, for you had no fear of God before your eyes. But, by-and-by, one of your little ones was taken ill. You watched, with anxious care, the pale cheek as it grew still paler—and grim Death took your darling from you. Again his shaft flew and a second one was taken—and your soul was melted because of heaviness. There is one here who had four children taken away in succession, till, at last, the mother's agonized soul, bereaved of all earthly comfort, could go to no one else but Christ—and when she went to Him, she found in Him what was better than 10 sons—His love, His pardon, His acceptance, His free gift of eternal life!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there have been many who have thus, by a series of bereavements, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, been brought to know the Lord! I need not stay to mention instances of which I am constantly hearing. I believe that the black angel of distress has brought as many to Christ as the bright angel of tender mercy. In fact, if you look well at the black angel, as I have called him, you will see that he is not black, but exceedingly bright, for there is a gracious ministry in those loving sorrows! There is an angelic kindness in those loving cruelties (as some term them) by which God sometimes bring hardened sinners to Himself!

III. But now I come to the main point of my discourse which is that although distress is often blessed to God's people, and is frequently sanctified to the conversion of sinners, our text is a notable proof that **THERE IS NOTHING IN TRIAL, ITSELF, WHICH WILL NECESSARILY SOFTEN THE HEART AND MAKE A MAN REPENT.** "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz."

If further proof were needed that trouble, affliction, sickness and familiarity with death necessarily softened the heart, then those people who have most to do with these things would have the most tender hearts—but it is not so. Think of the man who has to deal with the dead. Where will you find anywhere, as a class, a more hardened set of men than undertakers often are? I know that anyone who is well acquainted with them, must have observed how they joke over a corpse and make mirth over the death of their fellow creatures, regarding a fever rather as a blessing which brings them employment than as a calamity which

takes away the husband from the wife, or the parent from the children. I do not speak without my book in this case, and it is very much the same with other people. I think I said, one day, that if a man or a woman were not converted before they became pew-openers at a church or a chapel, it was probable that they never would be converted—and I am still of the same opinion. I once said that I thought even reporters of sermons, if they did not know the Lord before they undertook that work, would very likely fail to get any good out of the sermon and, therefore, it is always a great joy to me when I know that those who have any share in the preparation of my sermons with a view to their publication have realized the power of the Truth of God in their own hearts so that, even while engaged in the mechanical operations connected with reporting and printing the sermons, their souls drink in something of the sweetness of the Truth which is afterwards to be read by others.

Probably, however, the truth of the text will be best illustrated by a Scriptural instance. Look at Pharaoh. Was any man ever more troubled than he was? All the power of land, and water, and sky united to plague him! It seemed as if all the frogs in the world had made Egypt their rendezvous—and the locusts, and the lice, and the flies, and cattle diseases, and boils, and the hail, and the thick darkness—and though all these plagues came upon Pharaoh, he still hardened his heart and would not let the people go! Affliction did not soften him. On the contrary, it hardened him. And the case of Ahaz is another instance of the same evil spirit, for the more trials came to him, the more did he trespass against the Lord. The children of Israel, too, though they were smitten many times, yet revolted again and again. They were hunted about by marauders and delivered up to their enemies. Their crops were devoured of locusts. Famine and pestilence came upon them, but, for all that, they turned not unto the Lord, but hardened their hearts against Him and were a stiff-necked generation, even as they are unto this day!

However, I need not go on beating round the bush, for, if further proofs that sorrow does not necessarily soften are needed, there are plenty of such proofs here at this moment. There is that sailor over yonder. He knows that he is a great deal worse than he was three or four years ago. He had more pricks of conscience then, than he has now, yet it is not many months since he escaped from shipwreck. He thought the angry deep must surely swallow him up, so he cried unto God in his time of trouble, and said, “Save me, O God, for the waters have come in unto my soul!” God spared his life, but the trial he then endured had no beneficial effect upon him and, as I have said, he is a worse man, now, than he was years ago! Then there is that man yonder—whose business has been going down. What effect has that had upon him? He is growing harder and harder and is even cursing God for what he calls his bad luck! In trying to improve his position, he is only plunging deeper into the mire and he will be head over heels in the morass, presently, unless the almighty Grace of God shall deliver him! But the man is not softened in spirit by all that he has had to endure. That which would have softened him had he been as wax, has hardened him because his nature

is like clay. May God yet have mercy on him, for I plainly perceive that his briars, by themselves, will be of no use to him!

And you, too, who have come creeping out to this service—you have been so ill that hospital after hospital has turned you away as incurable. The doctors say that nothing more can be done for you, so you have come limping in here, though you can scarcely keep your seat for weariness—you are very ill and weak—yet your unhumiliated spirit is as proud as though your ribs were made of iron and your heart were strong as steel! If you should be chastened any more, you would only revolt more and more. You have already been smitten until your whole head is sick and your whole heart is faint—from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet there is no soundness in you, for you have become, as the result of God’s chastisements, a mass of wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! Yet still is sin as strongly entrenched within your soul as ever it was! What more shall the Lord do to you? Shall He give you up as hopeless? Shall He make you as Admah? Shall He set you as Zeboim? Shall He say concerning you, “He is joined unto his idols; let him alone”? What else remains to be done for you where all this affliction and trial will not break your heart?

I might go on pointing out you who are like king Ahaz, for my Master knows all about you and He knows how to direct my tongue so that I shall describe you. I feel a great yearning of heart, the throes of strong convulsions in my soul over some of you who are here! I know that I have a special message from God for some whom I am now addressing. Who and where they are, the Lord knows. I do not, but I pray that my message may now be accepted by them. As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you turn not at His rebuke, O Soul—if this last affliction shall not humble you, He will dash you in pieces like a potter’s vessel and break you with a rod of iron! “Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?” Why will you draw destruction down upon your own head? Why will you stain your garments with your own blood? Why will you dash yourself to pieces upon the bosses of Jehovah’s buckler? Why will you run upon the edge of His sword? Why will you leap into the fires of Hell? Why will you ruin your soul forever? Pause, I entreat you! A brother’s love bids you pause! You who are like “that king Ahaz” who, in the time of his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, I pray you to stop and consider, lest, at your next step, your feet should hang over the awful darkness of the Pit and your soul be hurled into the eternal depths!

I have thus, I hope, come somewhat near the mark at which I am aiming. And I am getting to speak right home to those who have had afflictions and trials, but are growing worse, rather than better, notwithstanding all that has happened to them. I will turn from them to speak to some of you who have the notion that you will repent and believe in Christ some day, but you will not repent and believe in Christ just yet. You have not made up your minds that you will go to Hell—oh, no, you mean to be saved, one of these days! You have not decided when it shall be, but still, you do mean it to happen one of these days! Your secret thought is that one of these days you will be obedient to the

heavenly vision. You talk to yourselves in some such fashion as this, “I shall be laid aside one day. Perhaps it may not be until I grow old and when I am ill—then I shall have time to turn the matter over calmly and quietly. I have heard my friends say concerning some who had lived very bad lives, that they hoped it was all right with them at the last and, therefore, may I not hope that it will be all right with me?”

Friend, I want to give you a warning word! Perhaps my meeting you here and talking especially to you for a little while may be the means of your eternal salvation! What makes you imagine that a time of sickness is a suitable time for repentance? Do you not think that you will have quite enough to do to bear your bodily pains without having to think of the state of your soul? When your head is aching, you cannot properly attend even to your earthly business—so how can you hope to attend to your soul’s business when your head and your heart will both be aching? You find that your worldly concerns need a healthy mind and body to conduct them properly—so do you think that when the mind is becoming weak through senile decay and physical infirmity—that then will be a fitting time to think of these momentous and eternal realities?

In many diseases I believe that repentance and faith are scarcely possible, for some of them bring such a lethargy of spirit that the mind is hardly able to act at all. There are, doubtless, many persons who are alive but who, for all practical purposes, are dead long before they actually die. You know, too, how often the very thought of death is so harassing to an unbeliever that he can hardly think of sin. A murderer may repent that he has been brought to the gallows, yet not repent of the murder that brought him there—just as, on their deathbed, many repent of Hell, but not of sin! I fear that often the sense of the wrath to come gets to be so vivid and so real that sin hardly comes into the reckoning—and remember, Friend, that it is not repentance of Hell that will save you, but repentance of SIN—not repentance of the punishment, but repentance of the evil deed itself—a sincere hatred of the very pleasure which sin would bring! O Sirs, take my word for it—and I think that if there were physicians here, they would certify that I am speaking the truth when I say that there are other things to do on your deathbed than to talk of “making your peace with God.” I am uttering a solemn Truth of God, but it is one that must be spoken! There may have been some few persons who have been saved on a deathbed, but my own conviction is that they have been very, very, very, very, very few! We only read in Scripture of one who was saved at the last—the dying thief on the Cross—and it has been well said that there was one so that none might despair—but *only one* that none might presume! I do not know that there ever was another besides the dying thief who was called by Grace at the eleventh hour! I repeat that I do not know. I do not say that there have not been any—I hope there have been many—but I do not know it. I have no revelation concerning it. There is nothing in this blessed Book about it. Only this I know—there was one—and therefore I hope there have been more. But since I only know of that one, I would warn you not to put any confidence in a repentance that may possibly come at the last.

You may be saved on your deathbed, but I think there is every probability that you who have loved sin so long, will hug it to the last! I do not see any reason why you would suddenly turn your backs on your former course. If there is any such reason, let it operate upon you *now*. Surely it would have as much force upon your conscience at this moment—while you are capable of weighing the whole matter calmly and deliberately—as it will have when you are tossing on your bed and your judgment has lost a great part, if not all of its former vigor! May God bring you to Christ now! But do not, I pray you, be dreaming about a deathbed on which you may never lie, or of a repentance which you may never experience!

There was a man who was an awful swearer and whenever anybody spoke to him about his not being saved, he used to say, “Oh, well, when my turn comes to die, I shall just say, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me,’ and that will be enough.” It happened that one dark night, when going home on horseback, drunk, his horse leaped the railing of a high bridge and horse and rider fell right into the water. And the last word that the man was heard to utter was an oath—so beyond all doubt he plunged into a hopeless eternity! It is quite possible that you will never have the opportunity to breathe a dying prayer, or if you could have such an opportunity, it is quite possible that you would have no inclination to utter it. Remember that “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” May God, in His Sovereign Mercy, turn you to Himself now!

Now I come back to you who have had many trials, but who have not been bettered by them. My Friend over yonder, you do not often hear a minister preach the Word of God and, therefore, now that I have you here, let me deal very plainly and faithfully with you. Why do you think that your trials were sent to you? I have shown you that distress often has been blessed to others. Now, supposing you have had an experience which has been blessed to others, but it has been no blessing to you—what is the inference? If a man takes a piece of quartz in which he thinks there is some gold, and puts it through the usual processes for extracting gold—and when he has done that, sees that there is no likelihood of finding gold in it, what is he likely to do with it? Why, I think, before long, when he has tried all the plans he can think of, he will throw it away and have nothing more to do with it! And is it not likely that God will soon throw you away as utterly worthless? Did you not say, the other night, that you wished God would leave you alone? You would not have come in to this service if you had thought that I should speak so pointedly and personally to you, would you? You would like to see every church, and chapel, and mission-hall destroyed—you would like to have no Sundays, and no religious people, because they plague you—they get in your way, they stick pins in your pillow, they will not leave you alone to sleep the sleep of death!

But do you not see that the fact that you want to be left alone is, itself, a proof of your reprobate mind? God is beginning to leave you alone, I am afraid, inasmuch as you are wishing to be left alone. I am afraid that awful curse will come upon you and, possibly, it will come upon you

soon. Should your present condition continue much longer, I can tell you what will happen to you—you will become an avowed atheist. You will even deny the existence of God! You may even become an open blasphemer, or you may become unconscious of any spiritual emotion. Your conscience will never prick you and you will go on sinning with a high hand until you come to die. Perhaps, even then, no alarm or terror will disturb your false peace of mind. Even when you dip your feet in the chilly stream of the River of Death, you will be self-deceived to the last. But oh, Sir, what a change will come over you when you once get into the world of eternal realities! When, at last, you realize that you are a lost soul and that you have forever to anticipate the wrath to come, what will you do then? O Man, how will the blood boil in your veins and your nerves become burning tracks for the wheels of pain to travel on! God help you! God save you! Only He can do this, for I see the dread forecast of the flames of Hell in you when you begin to ask God to leave you alone in your sin!

“Well,” says one, “like that king Ahaz, I have transgressed yet more and more against the Lord notwithstanding all my distress. But God, who knows all things, knows that I would be saved if I could. While you were singing that hymn just now, I thought I would act upon it. I said in my heart—

**“I can but perish if I go.
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away I know,
I must forever die.”**

Dear Friend, give me your hand! I feel that I may rejoice over you, for if God the Holy Spirit has put it into your heart to say, “I am resolved to try,” or, better still, “I am resolved to trust Jesus Christ as my Savior—though He slays me, I will trust in Him”—depend upon it, He will not slay you! He would not do so even if you were the blackest of sinners—one who had sinned till you had become the vilest of all offenders! Jesus casts out none who come to Him by faith. Do, I pray you, now say in your soul, “God helping me, I will now come to Him—and who can tell whether there may not be a harp in Heaven even for me, and a crown of glory for me? I trust that I may yet stand with all the blood-washed host before the Throne of God above and join in singing the everlasting song of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And even here on earth, I may be among the children of God, I may be forgiven, I may be saved, I may be accepted in the Beloved.” If you talk thus, and mean all that you say, I say unto you, not only that this may be the case with you, but that it may be the case with you this very hour—

**“Oh, believe the promise true,
God to you His Son has given!”**

A loving Father waits with outstretched arms to welcome the returning prodigal to His heart. Jesus waits by the fountain filled with His precious blood to wash you from all your sinful stains. The Holy Spirit is working in you even now—’tis He who bids you come! Let not Satan persuade you that it is too late for you to come to Jesus—it is never too late while the Messenger of Mercy continues to speak to you! Let not the devil convince

you that you are too sinful to be saved—often the greatest sinners are the first to be saved! If the devil tells you that you are an extraordinary sinner, tell him that Christ is such an extraordinary Savior that He can save all sorts of sinners, ordinary and extraordinary, too! Say not in your heart that you cannot be saved, for, high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God’s thoughts above your thoughts and His ways above your ways! My poor Friend, if you feel your need of a Savior, join with me and with all the people of God here in singing this verse! Sing it from your heart and the great transaction’s done—

**“Nothing in my hands I bring:
Simply to Your Cross I cling!
Naked, come to You for dress—
Helpless, look to You for Grace!
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—509, 473, 514.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 THESSALONIANS 1; 2:1-4.

[This Exposition belongs to Sermon No. 2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE—but there was not space available for it there.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

2 Thessalonians 1:1, 2. *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* All nations have their special forms of salutation and this is the Christian’s greeting to his fellow Christians—“Grace unto you, and peace.” How much there is in this prayer! “Grace”—the free favor of God, the active energy of the Divine Power. And, “peace”—reconciliation to God, peace of conscience, peace with all men! My Brothers and Sisters, what better things could I desire for you, and what better things could you wish for your best beloved friends than these, “Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”?

3. *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren.* We do not feel this bond as much as we ought. We often feel ourselves bound to grumble and complain, but I question whether we think enough about being bound to praise God. And if we do not thank God as we ought for ourselves, it is little marvel if we are very slack in the duty of thanking Him for others. Herein, then, let us imitate this devout Apostle and let us consider ourselves bound to always thank God for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

3-7. *As it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other abounds; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to*

you who are troubled rest with us. You will perhaps say that this command is more easily given than carried out. And yet, my Brothers and Sisters, the Grace of God always enables us to perform what the precept of God commands! You who are troubled rest with us. If you can get even a partial glimpse of the Glory that is to follow your trouble. If you can see Christ suffering with you and realize your union with Him. If the blessed Spirit who pledges Himself to be with all the Lord’s people, shall be with you, you will find it not hard thing thus to rest. “You who are troubled rest with us.”

7. *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels.* This rest, then, it seems, is to be given to us mainly when Christ shall come with His mighty angels.

8, 9. *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.* I wonder what those persons who say that it is not the duty of men to believe the Gospel, make of this passage? Paul writes that those who “obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction.” Then, clearly, the Gospel demands and commands man’s obedience, and those who will not believe it shall be punished, not only for their other sins, but for this as their chief and damning fault—that they will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as set before them in the Gospel of His Grace.

10. *When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* Which passage means, I suppose, that as Christ will be admired in His own Person, so His Glory, reflected in all His children, will be a subject of admiration to the whole intelligent universe. The saints of God shall be so pure, so bright—such trophies of the Redeemer’s power to save—that He shall be admired in them! We know that in God’s great temple of the universe, everything does speak of His Glory and so, in the great spiritual temple of His Church, every separate saint shall show forth the Glory of Christ!

10, 11. *(Because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Therefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the word of faith with power.* Ministers should be much in prayer for their people. When John Welsh’s wife found him on the ground with his eyes red with weeping—and she found that he had been there supplicating by the hour together—she asked him what ailed him and he replied, “Woman, I have three thousand souls to care for, and I know not how they all prosper; therefore must I wrestle with God for them all.” Oh, that we felt more the weight of our ministry! It is, perhaps, the great fault of this age that so many who preach, yet preach with so little earnestness and are not sufficiently alive to the value of immortal souls! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make our ministry to be “the burden of the Lord” upon us!

12. *That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the Grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.* In his former Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul had written as if he expected Christ to come immediately. And the people seem to have taken his words so literally as to have lived in expectation of Christ’s advent and, perhaps, to have exhibited some degree of fear concerning it. He now calms their minds by telling them that Christ would not come until certain events had happened. The history of the world was not complete. The harvest of the Church was not ripe—neither had the sin of man and especially the “man of sin” become fully developed.

3, 4. *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* If this “man of sin” is not the Pope of Rome, we cannot tell who is the antichrist! Certainly, if this description were put in the *Hue-and-Cry*, and we were police officers, we should at once arrest the Pope as the man whose character agreed with the warrant in our hands! What does he call himself? “Vicar of Christ on earth.” What does he do but set himself up to be adored and worshipped as though he were Divine, making himself out to be the fountain and channel of all Grace? Beloved, this “man of sin” has been revealed! Now we may look for the coming of the Son of Man—but the day and the hour when He shall come, no man knows. No, and not even the angels of God!

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

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.”
2 Chronicles 28:23.***

I HAVE a little to say about the condition of Judah under Ahaz before I come to personal dealing with souls from this text. God had given to His people a very simple mode of worship. He was the invisible and only living God and they were to worship Him in spirit and in truth. There was to be one altar and that was to be at Jerusalem. But all the rest of the world was given up to idolatry and the Israelites were not a very spiritual people, so, by-and-by, they wanted something to see, some image, some symbol. When the 10 tribes broke off from Judah, they set up images of a bull to represent the strength of Deity. Those who kept to the worship of the invisible Jehovah without emblems, ridiculed these symbols, and called the bulls, in contempt, calves. But the calf-worship became very strong throughout Israel and there were many in Judah who were attracted to it. It was the worship of God, but it was the worship of God in a wrong way, for there was a very express Commandment which forbade it—“You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.”

There are still many who worship idols and images, but they say, “No, we do not worship them; we worship God through them.” Just so, but that is as much forbidden in the Second Commandment as the worship of other gods is forbidden in the First—they are both violations of the Divine Law! When the people of Judah had gone so far as to worship God through images, they went still farther and bowed down to Baal and Ash-taroath. They even bowed down to the sun and even *flies*, for Baal-Zebub, the “God of Flies,” became one of their objects of adoration! Associated with this idolatry was everything that was sinful. I do not dare tell you what horrible and loathsome abominations were witnessed in connection with the worship of these gods.

Do not, however, condemn those Jews and Israelites without remembering another story. In this world, in later times, the Son of God set up a pure and undefiled religion in which there was no similitude of God whatever. But, after a while, they who professed to worship Christ felt they needed to have a cross and crucifix, pictures and images. Of course they did not worship the cross, or the crucifix, or the pictures, or the images! No, but they professed to worship Christ by *the help of these things*. That was the first violation of the simplicity of worship and it was, in reality, departing from the living God. In a very short time they took to the worship of saints—and from that they went to the worship of cast clouts and rotten rags until some of us have seen, with our own eyes, bones—supposed to be the bones of saints—decayed teeth and all kinds of rubbish made the subjects of worship when they have been exposed to the gaze of the deluded people! Into such idolatry, by slow degrees, did those fall who professed to call themselves Christians—and only three or four hundred years ago, from one end of this island to the other, the land was full of “holy crucifixes,” images, relics and I know not what! The people were utterly given up to idolatry and the Gospel of God was scarcely known!

Then rang out, clear and shrill, the voices of Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin and the like and, after a while, men arose who said, “We will worship none but God—and all these images we utterly abhor.” There was, for them, nothing but the prison, the stake and all manner of cruel deaths—but they were steadfast even unto the end! You know how brave Hugh Latimer, as he began to burn at the stake in his old age, cheered up his companion by saying, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall, this day, light such a candle by God’s Grace in England as I trust shall never be put out.” And so they did. There came out to die for Christ, poor, humble, illiterate men and women—and some of noble rank! And even bishops could sometimes take their share of the persecution and die until, at last, men began to hate the idols by reason of the cruelty which was used in keeping them up! Then came a revolt against Romanism and all over England men smashed the “holy water” basins, defaced the pictures, pulled down the images and treated them with utter contempt! And England was freed from the idolatry under which she had groaned so long. We thought she would always remain free, but, alas, we only dreamed it. By-and-by there came men in the Established Church who did not bid us worship saints, nor did they, at first, go very far in idolatry, but they said that they must have vestments, incense and I know not what. And now they have boldly set up the crucifix—that calf of Baal, for it is nothing better—that image which they adore and which we loathe because it has become the thin end of the wedge—the first open return to idolatry!

Where is true Protestant feeling in England? It seems to me to be almost extinct! All that many care for is an ornate service—something beautiful for the eyes to rest upon, flowers more abundant than in a conservatory, music sweet to the ear, the scent of incense and thus, by-and-

by—unless God prevents it—we shall get back to the old Roman idolatry and that would be the ruin of this land as it has been the ruin of every land where it has had the sway! Time was when God covered England with His wing, when Spain's Armada was swept away by the tempest, like chaff before the wind, and God was with our country and gave her power and made her to be the empress of the seas. But if she forsakes her God, she will fall from her heights! If this land becomes full of images and idols again—and there are none found to protest against it—the God that lifted us up will throw us down! He that has used us for His Glory will reckon us to be unfit for His service and cast us away with other nations that He has forsaken because of their defilement through idolatry! I will not say more upon this matter, now, but I will pray about it, and I ask every man who feels as I do to continue to pray, lest it should be said of us, concerning these idols, "They were the ruin of him, and of all Israel," for so it must be if we forsake the living God and turn aside unto gods that are not gods!

Now I come to a more practical matter as far as each individual is concerned and, first, I shall want you to notice *the man ruining himself*. Secondly, the *man in ruins*. And, thirdly, *other people ruined with him*.

I. First, look at THE MAN RUINING HIMSELF.

Sin will ruin any man. If it is not forsaken, it will eternally ruin him. Ahaz is the type of those who ruin themselves. I daresay many will at once exclaim, "This description does not belong to us!" Perhaps you suppose it never could belong to you. Listen, I have seen those who swore to live a holy life turn aside to the grossest immorality. Often they have been men who thought they were past temptation and believed it was utterly impossible that they should turn aside. Let us speak of Ahaz and, as we do so, let each man take to heart anything that belongs to himself—and that which does not belong to him, let him pray God to bless to the one to whom it is suitable.

Here, then, was one who, as a king, *began life by determining to be his own master*. He had been told to worship the invisible God with the simple rites of the Law, but he resolved that he would worship what he pleased, where he pleased and how he pleased. He was not to be dictated to! He would select his own gods and worship as many as he pleased. So he did, "but they were the ruin of him." A man may begin life with this resolution—"I am not going to be bound by anybody. I shall do as I like, I shall have my own way. I shall be independent, I am not going to be obedient to God, nor to hearken to what His Book prescribes. I shall have what indulgences I choose." If he does so, those indulgences will be "the ruin of him." That character which has not for its cornerstone, obedience to God, is a character that will tumble down in ruins one day or another! O young man, begin life with this resolve, "I will serve God. I will seek to know His mind and His will, and I will say to all others, 'Whether it is right to obey God rather than man, you judge.'"

This man, Ahaz, was also *very high-handed in his sin*. He even set up rival altars in the Temple itself! Dreadful as it seems, yet he imported an

altar from Damascus and erected it in the place where had stood the altar of God! He went beyond his predecessors in his determination that idolatry should cover all the land—and he persecuted and oppressed the faithful servants of Jehovah. A man may be very high-handed against God and sneeringly ask, with Pharaoh, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” But if he does so, it will be “the ruin of him.” Pharaoh did not find the answer. He might continue to provoke Jehovah, but, in the end, when God had killed the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all her strength, he learned that it is perilous for a man to be high-handed with God!

Further, Ahaz also *lavished great treasure upon his sin*. All the wealth he had, he was willing to spend in order that he might have his own way and worship his own gods. Yet, “they were the ruin of him.” Perhaps he was ruined all the faster for that very reason. When a man has plenty of money and he lets it run away freely, simply that he may sin against his God and indulge his evil passions, he may seem to flourish for a while, but let no man envy him, for those passions will be “the ruin of him.” Though the land is full of silver and gold, though there is no end of the horses and chariots, yet, as the Lord lives, if a man shall use these in fighting against God, they will be “the ruin of him.” That is how it will end, sooner or later—and probably sooner!

Ahaz also *defied the chastisement of God*. The Lord punished him by permitting his enemies to invade his country. His people were carried away captive, yet he would not humble himself on account of that. The more he was distressed, the more he sinned. “This is that king Ahaz,” and we have seen men whom God has terribly smitten, but they have not yielded to Him. They have even risen from a sick bed more wicked than when they were stretched upon it—breaking their promises, casting their vows to the wind and going back, “like the dog to his own vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” They have said that they cared nothing for pain, sickness, illness—they would not turn unto the Lord—and thus their sins were the ruin of them. The blows of God came home to them, at last, and sin slew them, after all!

Yet further, Ahaz *was exceedingly clever*. He said, “I will make a friend of Tilgath-Pilneser, the king of Assyria, and he will protect me. I will put myself in vassalage under him and then the little kings of Syria and Israel will be afraid to touch me, and I shall be left in quiet.” Ah, men are sometimes very clever in their sin. At least they think they are! They will not yield to God. They will not become Christians—they are not such fools! They are so sharp, they will do well enough! They have a friend, somewhere. They have a card they have not yet played and a scheme which, when it is revealed, will astonish you! They will do well enough without God—let those who want Him pray to Him. Yet their sins will be the ruin of them, for the clever men shall be taken in their own craftiness and shall be destroyed by the very instruments with which they sought to promote their prosperity—even as this man was, for, when the king of

Assyria came, he plundered the palace of Ahaz and took away his wealth—and did not help him in the least.

Ahaz was also *a man of great taste*. That was one reason why he was an idolater—the worship of God, in a simple manner, did not please him, or gratify his refined taste. He was a cultured and aesthetic individual, so, when he went down to Damascus and saw an idolatrous altar, he said, “That is my idea of an altar! I will have one like it.” So the pattern of it was sent off to Jerusalem and Uriah, the priest, made himself very busy in carrying out the king’s wishes so that, by the time Ahaz came back, there was his new altar all ready. I can imagine that he said, as he looked at it, “That is the style of altar for me! I want none of your old-fashioned Davidic altars.” Yet those fine ideas of his were “the ruin of him.” And I am afraid there are a great many persons who will be ruined by their taste—by allowing it to override conscience and suffering, themselves, to be guided by their whims and fancies—and not by the teaching of the Word of God. To me that seems beautiful which God ordains—and that is abominable which God abhors! May it be so with each one of us, but if we allow our own taste to lead us into sin, then we shall find that it will be the ruin of us and of all who do like unto us.

This man—I have not yet completed my portrait of him—had *some to back him who ought to have opposed him*. When his predecessor, Uzziah, went into the Temple to offer incense, the priests withstood him and thrust him out for he had no right there—and leprosy came upon his brow and he hastened to go out. But when Ahaz wanted this new altar, Uriah the priest was quite ready to adapt himself to his lord’s ideas. He would, of course, prefer the old-fashioned low church but, still, he was a very broad-minded man and he was willing to have a high church altar set up if his majesty wished it. And when his majesty said so and when he came and offered sacrifices upon it, Uriah did not say a word against it. How could he? It was a State church and, therefore, the king did as he liked! That style of action is often seen in religious and social life. A man does wrong and the Christian minister who ought to speak plainly to him about it, does not dare to do so! Perhaps the minister, who ought to be faithful for his Master’s sake, thinks that, for the sake of peace, he had better not interfere and so he does not. Then the guilty man says, “It does not matter what I do, I have a priest at the back of me, I shall be all right.” Yet his sins are “the ruin of him” for all that. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.”

This man, Ahaz, had another thought within his mind, namely, that he *would imitate prosperous sinners*. “Look,” he said, “at the king of Syria. Look how he prospers! I will worship his gods and then I shall prosper, too.” “But they were the ruin of him.” That is where the emphasis of the text comes in. I have known a man say in deeds, if not in words, “I know what I will do. I have no trust in God nor in His Providence, but there is So-and-So who has a very clever way of making money, I shall do as he does.” Oh, the many who have found that this mode of action has been the ruin of them—when they have broken loose

from the bonds of integrity and righteousness—and have begun to play fast and loose with honesty and truth! Take heed, dear Friends, not to imitate the prosperous sinner, for if you do, you may be sure that following his plans will be the ruin of you! Envy not the man who gets rich by that which is not straightforward, for he must come to an evil end.

It was so with Ahaz, for *he abandoned the worship of God altogether*. He broke up the holy vessels of God's House, put out all the lamps which had burned perpetually and shut up the doors of the House of the Lord. This is the case, nowadays, with men who say that they have done with religion. Nobody in their house goes to a place of worship. They have no Bibles to bother them, they care nothing about the Sabbath. As for themselves, they never darken the doors of any House of Prayer—you never see them there, any more, and they say, "We have got rid of this, and of that, which used to be our custom." But such conduct is the ruin of them! A man may harden himself until he becomes like the nether millstone, his conscience may seem to be suffocated and the last spark of goodness to be extinct within him—but he cannot, for all that, evade the impending doom—for his sins will be "the ruin of him." It is hard work to have to speak thus, but there are some who must have this stern Truth of God spoken to them, lest they should die in their sins.

II. Secondly, and very briefly, I want you to look AT THE MAN IN RUINS.

You say, perhaps, that you will never be in that state. You are not converted, but you are honest, upright and truthful. Well, we shall see, or, at all events, *God* will see! I have beheld a man in ruins who once seemed a Christian. He came in and out among his brethren and they esteemed him. But he was living secretly in a defiled life. He was unchaste and that worm gnawed and gnawed, until, at last, his household was forsaken, domestic comfort was gone—and at this moment I scarcely know where he is. And no one wishes to know, for he has become so abandoned and so foul that those who once knew him can only sigh as they remember him.

I have known others of this sort. They were apparently doing well. They were admirable and excellent. They were the delight of every company in which they entered, but they took the intoxicating cup, a little, and then a little more, and then secret drinking became visible by certain tokens upon the face and, by-and-by, business was neglected, other things were not attended to and now the man may be known by his very clothing—if he is not in rags, he is near to it—his character is gone, for he is a confirmed drunk. He must acknowledge it—he cannot truthfully deny it. That is another kind of ruin. I have also seen a young Christian man apparently begin to go into bad company and join with those who were merry fellows. It is true they scoffed at religion a little, but he winked at that, for he enjoyed their society. They flattered him and now he has become just as bad as they are! Instead of being shocked at infidel sentiments, he is the first to vent them—a very ringleader in taking the chair of the scoffer—and sitting there a ruined man!

I have seen men ruined as to their peace. They once seemed bright and happy, but they are not so now—their laughter is but a mimic joy. They have sinned, they have turned aside from God and their peace is marred. In some, their character is ruined. Those who know them cannot trust them, so their prospects are ruined. They went aside, little by little, and, whereas we hoped they would have been useful and honorable men, they are the very reverse—they are like drowning men—they are, themselves, sinking—and they are pulling down others with them! Worst of all, their soul is ruined and, unless infinite mercy shall prevent it, they are ruined for eternity, ruined past all hope save that one grand hope—the door of which stands open even to the dying sinner—faith in Jesus Christ! But as yet they are ruined, utterly ruined, though once they seemed to bid as fair for goodness as any man in the world!

Whenever I see a ruin, I cannot help thinking of what it used to be. Can you? Here once sat knights at their tables, while the minstrel poured forth sweetest song. Now, all is a desolation! So, in that man was once everything that was hopeful—you would have been glad to go to the House of God in company with him. Look at him now—the victim of every passion, a waif and stray upon the great ocean of vice!

When you look at a ruin, you cannot help thinking what it might yet be. It was once a famous Church where the praises of God rang out both morning and evening. It might be so, still, but the roof is gone, the walls are tottering and the windows let in the cold blasts. So, I see a man who once seemed to praise God, but he is a ruin. His sins have been “the ruin of him.” What do you often find in a ruin? Go there at night and hear the owl hooting to his fellow. Go by day and see all manner of loathsome creatures finding harbor there. So, go to the ruined man, the man who once promised as well as any man among us, but who departed from God and gave way to sin and, little by little, went further and further from the paths of rightness. Think of him with sorrow. He has lost his opportunity—think what he might have been. Ah, and think what he is now through his sins. “They were the ruin of him.”

If I had the time, I would like to indicate many things, perhaps to men here, that will be the ruin of them. But if there is one here who has begun to get away from God, who thinks that he can do without God, I implore him to stop before he goes further, for sin will be “the ruin of him!” There never was a man yet who made a good bargain with sin. There is not one man, now in eternity, whose course in this life is finished, who, when he takes his tablet to reckon up the result of a sinful life, can say that he was the gainer by it. What if it made him a king, if he waded through sin to a throne? What are his gains today? What if he grew rich—where is his wealth now? That solemn question of our Lord he can sorrowfully answer for himself—“What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Oh, that God the blessed Spirit would send these warnings home to some who are beginning to trifle with sin, lest it should be the ruin of them!

III. I have one more point to dwell upon. Not only was there a man in ruins, but there were *others that were ruined with him*, for the text says, "They were the ruin of him, *and of all Israel.*"

Ahaz ruined all Israel as well as himself! This man did not perish alone in his iniquity! My Friends, if you perish in your sin, you will not perish alone. That is one of the most terrible things about evil. If I have preached to you, during my ministry here, false doctrines and that which is not God's Word, there are many here who must perish with me. But then my lot would be more horrible than that of any one among you if I have misled you and if I have not been faithful. It will be an awful thing for a man who has occupied a pulpit and yet has not preached the Gospel, to go before the bar of God and have to answer for the souls committed to him! That ancient message still needs to be heard—"If the watchman sees the sword come and blows not the trumpet, and the people are not warned. If the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." This it is that makes our work so weighty that our knees, sometimes, knock together when we are thinking of going up to our pulpit again! It is no child's play, Sirs, if there is to be a judgment and we are to answer for our faithfulness or unfaithfulness! What must be our account if we are not true to God and to man?

"Don't speak so sharply," says one. "You are very dogmatic, Sir," says another. I know what is said, but what is that, compared with clearing my conscience so that I may stand up in the light of the Last Great Day an honest man? I have prayed many a time that I might be able, at the end of my ministry, to say what George Fox, the Quaker, said when he was dying, "I am clear, I am clear!" If we have been faithful in our testimony. If we have said what we felt and have not hesitated to speak out for fear of sinful men—and if we have never tried to put velvet on our lips, that we might restrain the Spirit's course within us—to earn the approval of some few persons of taste—it will be well with us in the Great Day of Account!

"Well," says someone, "I am not a minister." No, perhaps you are not. But are you a father? Suppose your boy perishes through your iniquity, what will you say to that? One day I heard a man, who was given to drink, say to his son, "Open your shoulders, boy, and take it in like a man! I want you to drink like your father." Who but his father made that boy a drunk? There was a father who dropped an oath. Do I mean you, you ask? Yes, if you are here tonight. When your boy took to cursing and swearing, you did not like it—but who taught him to swear? Are there not many men who will be the ruin of their children's souls? And are there not mothers, in a different rank of life, who train their daughters for gaiety and frivolity, who will have to answer for the ruin of their souls? Do you not think that there are people who would like to be thought respectable, who are planning to bring up their children to be victims to sin? They know they are not putting them where they are likely

to come under good influences, but where, according to the order of nature, they will be led away from Christ and from the service of God!

O Sirs, we all have vastly more influence than we reckon upon! The working man in the shop thinks that he is the victim of his companions' bad example, but, if he had more backbone, he might be the master and leader of them! Now he follows suit and goes in the swim. But if he were to be converted, how many he might influence for good! I thank God that when men are really turned by His Grace, those who have been the worst usually become the best! Did you not hear me speak, just now, of grand old Hugh Latimer, who burned so bravely for the faith? Yet he was, before his conversion, one of the most thoroughgoing Papists in the world—and was so violent that he would have put to death every heretic that he got hold of! But when the Grace of God arrested him, he became just as earnest for the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he had been earnest against it! If sin will be the ruin of men—and surely it will—yet our Lord Jesus Christ knows how to take ruined sinners and build them up to be temples for His indwelling! Christ will take the very castaways of the devil and use them for Himself. He delights to stoop over the dunghill and pick up a broken vessel that is thrown away and make it into a vessel meet for the Master's use!

Do we not sometimes sing to His praise that He has taken us from the dunghill and made us to sit amongst princes, even the princes of His people? Turn unto God, then, you wanderers! Turn unto Christ! It may be so with you! Look to the bleeding wounds of the great Redeemer! May His Spirit help you to do so at this very hour and, looking, you shall live! And then your sins shall not be the ruin of you, but the Repairer of these ruins shall come to build you up into a temple for His praise! The Lord bless these feeble words, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 28:1-5, 16-27; ISAIAH 2:6-22.**

2 Chronicles 28:1. *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. So that he died before he reached the prime of life—he was cut off by God in the very midst of his sin.*

1, 2. *But he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. They had set up the worship of God under emblems. There were the calves of Bethel, the representation of strength—it was the worship of God by imagery and Ahaz imitated it—and went even further in sin.*

2. *And made also molten images for Baalim.* If we worship the true God under some symbol, the next step is to worship a false god.

3. *Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* The worship of Moloch was one of the most horrible that can be imagined. A bronze image was

made terribly hot and then children were thrust into its burning arms to be consumed. And this king went to such a length that he gave his own children to death in that cruel fashion in the place commonly called by the Jews, Topheth, or the Place of Spitting, since it was so loathsome to them to think of this false god.

4. *He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.* According to the command of God, there was to be but one altar and that one was to be at Jerusalem. But these people multiplied their altars—there could not be a high place but they must have an idol shrine set up upon it.

5. *Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.* He received blow upon blow—God would not let him rest in his sin. Now turn to verse sixteen.

16. *At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.* The king of Assyria was the greatest potentate in that region—all the little kings were afraid of him and Ahaz, therefore, sent to him for help when they were in trouble. Ahaz made no appeal to God for the assistance he required—he turned to the arm of flesh.

17. *For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah and carried away captives.* The Edomites had been under subjection to Judah, but now that God had left her, Judah could not hold her position.

18. *The Philistines also.* A people that one might have thought had become extinct, so weak were they that we scarcely hear of them, yet, “the Philistines also”—

18-20. *Had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-Shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo, also, and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there. For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel; for he made Judah naked and transgressed sorely against the LORD. And Tilgath-Pilneser king of Assyria came unto him and distressed him, but strengthened him not.* How vain it is to seek relief apart from God!

21, 22. *For Ahaz took away a portion out of the House of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.* A black mark is put against his name, to show how greatly guilty he was. Those who rebel against Divine checks and will not be held in by the Providence of God are to be written down in capital letters as great sinners. They sin with emphasis who sin against the chastising rod!

23-25. *For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the House*

of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the House of God, and shut up the doors of the House of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers. He set up little shrines so that every passerby might worship which idol he pleased—and each man might present a little incense—thus the whole city was filled with idolatry.

26, 27. *Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem; but they brought him not into the sepulchers of the kings of Israel.* There was a holy and reverent feeling among the remnant of God's people that a man who had lived as Ahaz had done should not lie with the good kings of Israel.

27. *And Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.* Now turn to Isaiah, the second chapter, and the sixth verse.

Isaiah 2:6. *Therefore You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, because they are replenished from the east and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they are pleased with the children of strangers.* It was God's command that they should keep themselves separate and worship only Him, but, in the reign of this man Ahaz, they began to practice all the foul arts of the nations round about them. They had "soothsayers like the Philistines"—men who pretended to divine future events from the flights of birds, or from the entrails of victims—and a thousand other things. They went into witchcraft and the unhallowed arts of the heathen.

7-9. *Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: and the mean man bows down, and the great man humbles himself: therefore forgive them not.* The poor men worshipped these idols and the rich did the same. All over the country the people were bowing before some symbol or other instead of worshipping the unseen God in spirit and in truth. Therefore the Prophet foretold that something terrible would happen to them.

10-16. *Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of Hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.* These people were wealthy through the natural riches of their land and through commerce with other nations. They were skilled in the arts, according to the fashion of the times, but

now God declares that because they were proud, all their treasures would be destroyed and the things wherein they boasted should be taken away from them.

17, 18. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish.* They set them up at every street corner, they even put them before the House of God, itself. On every green hill and in every grove, they worshipped with filthy rites that can scarcely be thought of without a blush! But God declared that He would sweep them all away and so He did when He visited the land in His fierce anger.

19-22. *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he? Can you imagine Isaiah delivering this stern, but noble message—gorgeous in language, poetic and sublime to the very last degree? What courage it must have taken for him to stand forth and deliver this before an idolatrous king and a people who went greedily after him! Verily, the Lord has raised up His faithful servants in all times, and He gives them the courage of lions and voices that are very terrible! Yet the hearts of men are seldom moved. “Cease you,” says Isaiah, “cease you from man”—from the king of Assyria—from all powers in which you trust! “Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?”*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—471, 473, 526.

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

A KING SENT IN LOVE NO. 2760

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 5, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1879.*

*“Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon,
Because the LORD has loved His people, He has made you king over them.”
2 Chronicles 2:11.*

I THINK that you must have been struck with the deeply religious tone of the communications which passed between Solomon and Hiram. I am inclined to think that Hiram must have been a proselyte to the faith of Israel. At any rate, the dispatches between these two neighboring kings contain very gracious references to Jehovah and His dealings with His ancient people. Not that I recommend that the dispatches which are sent now between kings should be of a similar character, for that would be a piece of beggarly hypocrisy! What has God to do with the most of them? And what has He to do with the transactions of modern times, in which the invasion of countries by the more powerful is perpetually being justified by the laws of politics which seem to be the very reverse of the Laws of God? Oh, that better times might come, when kings would rule in righteousness! One almost despairs of them, but, at any rate, there is a King coming who will rule in righteousness! Make no delays, O our God!

In the letter, which was written by Hiram, we note that he declares his belief that Solomon was of such a character that his reign was a special blessing from God to His people. That is the meaning of our text—“Because the Lord has loved His people, He has made you king over them.” Such was the character of Solomon, in those early days before he began to decline from the splendor of his first estate, that even this heathen monarch could see that he was bound to be a blessing to the people. I wish that your life and mine, dear Friends, might always have that about it which should make even the worldling say, “That young man is likely to be a blessing to his family. That woman is sure to be a blessing to her husband and to her children.” I would to God that our character was so transparent, so true, pure and good, that all who knew us might feel that we were a blessing to those among whom we dwell!

I want you to notice, also, that Hiram here distinctly recognizes that every blessing comes from God. If Solomon is a blessing to his subjects, Hiram attributes that to the fact of God having placed him where he was. Now, if one who had been a heathen could thus trace a blessing back to

God as its source, what heathen must those be who never do anything of the sort, but trace it to what they call, “good luck,” or to “chance,” or to *anything* rather than to God? O Beloved, whenever there is anything of good, anything of excellence, anything of happiness that comes to our door, let us praise and bless the God who gave it! We are all too apt to complain of Him when we suffer and ready enough to attribute our afflictions to Him. Surely, then, when plentiful mercies come to us, we should magnify and glorify the name of the Lord our God from whom they come! We should say of every mercy, in somewhat similar fashion to that of Hiram when he wrote to Solomon, “Because the Lord has loved His people, therefore has He done this and that for them.”

I purpose, however, to take our text right away from Solomon for, true as it was in his case, it is more emphatically true in reference to our King. It is still true, as was said in Thessalonica in Paul’s day, “There is another King, one Jesus,” and many here present, I am thankful to know, are His loyal subjects. King of kings is He to us and our soul loves to worship and adore Him. Well, now, God has been pleased to make Christ our King, so my text shall run thus—“Because the Lord has loved His people, He has made Jesus to be King over them.”

I. That shall be our first division, THE LOVE OF GOD HAS MADE JESUS TO BE OUR KING.

If we believe that, does it not prove that *we do not regard the dominion of Jesus Christ as any burden whatever?* It is a proof that in our esteem His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Those who look on from the outside say, “We would rather be perfectly free—free thinkers and free livers.” And when they hear any of us say, with the Psalmist, “O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds,” they feel that they do not want to share any such servitude with us. But we are living and truthful witnesses to the fact that we do not look upon the rule of Christ over us as any hardship. On the contrary, we take delight in it! We trace it to the love of God, not to His anger—not even to His justice, or to any necessity that may constrain Him, but to His infinite love and to His gracious thought that He could not do any better thing for us than to give us Jesus Christ to be our King—and we devoutly thank and bless the Lord, this day, that He has set Him over us, to rule us and to have dominion over our spirit, soul and body henceforth and forever.

But, Beloved, *there was an urgent necessity that we should have Jesus as our King.* We are such poor creatures that we cannot live without some form of rule and government. Men have tried to live in anarchy, but their experiment has proven to be a disastrous failure. Think of the French Revolution at the end of the 18th Century and see what awful abominations resulted from it. A den of tigers, all let loose upon one another, would be peacefulness, itself, compared with a mass of men living without any law or order! We are such creatures that we need to be under authority of some kind. God has frequently compared us to sheep, but what can sheep do without a shepherd? I do not know that there has

ever been a discovery made of really wild sheep anywhere. There are certain wild animals that are somewhat like sheep, but sheep like those with which we are familiar—what shiftless, hopeless, helpless, defenseless creatures they would be without a shepherd! They would soon die out altogether if it were not for man. The rule, leadership and kingly shepherdry of man are good for sheep—and Christ's rule is absolutely necessary for His sheep. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture if we have believed in Him and, we as much need Jesus, our Shepherd-King, as the sheep need their shepherd!

If you object to that figure, let us think of ourselves under a higher aspect. As many of us as have been born-again are the children of God. Now, a family without rule—I venture to say very boldly—is not a happy family. Children who are always allowed to do just as they like will very soon be exceedingly unhappy. A father's gentle sway over the various members of the household, which is, I take it, the first type of kingship, is absolutely necessary for their good—for disorder soon breeds unhappiness, envy, strife, malice and all kinds of evil. Every house needs to have a "*house-band*" to keep it together. Every family needs to have someone as its head. Every thinking person feels that it must be so and, therefore, how thankful we ought to be that our glorious God, seeing that His own brightness unveiled might have been too much for our feebleness, has given us His Son, "whom He has appointed Heir of all things," and made Him to be the first-born among many brethren, that He might sweetly rule the whole household! Because the Lord loved His people, therefore He gave Jesus to be King over them.

Further, this fact tends greatly to our happiness. It is not merely a matter of necessity, but, over and above that, it makes us exceedingly happy to have such a King as Jesus is. Just suppose, for a moment, that we, the people of God, were left without any law or ruler. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, in such a case as that, we would not know what to do! We might wish to do what was right, but we would not know what right was! I am sure we must all desire to be guided by God, for we feel unable to guide ourselves and we dare not trust the best earthly guide. So it is a mercy that we have a King to whom we can refer all difficult cases and who will guide us. Why, even if I were conscious of having done right, yet if I had no Ruler and Law-Giver, whose Infallible Word would assure me that I had done so, I would always be in a fidget about it! I would be anxious to know whether I had made a wise choice or not—whether I might not, after all, have put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. When a man is his own ruler, he has all the responsibility of what he does—but when he implicitly obeys Christ's command, he is not responsible for the result of his actions—that rests with Him who gave the command. If, in doing right, we meet with trouble—if we have to suffer persecution or if the reward of virtue does not reach us in the present—yet we have the comfort that we did what Jesus told us to do. We did what our King commanded, so the responsibility of it must rest with Him. This is always a sweet feeling and much to the ease of such poor minds as ours are.

“Well,” says one, “I like to be my own master.” Yes, and that involves two things—first, you have a very bad master and, next, your master has a fool for his servant! But he who takes the Lord Jesus Christ as his Master will be rightly and wisely guided—and hence arises the comfort of such a relationship.

But, to my mind, the bliss of being under the dominion of Christ lies *in the Character of Christ*. As I must have a master, let me have the Christ of Bethlehem—the Christ of Nazareth—the Christ of Calvary—the Christ of Heaven! If I must submit my mind and will to another—and surely I must do so, or else I must submit it to the imperious domination of my own lusts and passions, which is the worst slavery in the whole world—if I must have a king, let it be Jesus Christ, whose head was once crowned with thorns!

For, my Brothers and Sisters, in Him we have all the wisdom of Solomon and infinitely more. He will rule and guide us wisely. To err is human, yet He never makes any mistakes! His rule and guidance are Infalible!

There is also united with this wisdom, unlimited power, for, where Christ rules, He is able to protect. He can put forth the might of Omnipotence. His decrees and proclamations shall never be wasted words. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. Though He sometimes leaves His subjects to suffer in this world, (they must have tribulation, for they have to carry their cross after Him), yet He could deliver them in a moment if He pleased, for there is nobody above or below the sky who can successfully withstand the almighty power of the Christ of God! Happy are the people who have so wise and strong a King as He is.

But, then, with this wisdom and strength, He is also gentle. Was there ever such a gentleman and such a gentleman as He was? Who would not gladly serve Him who suffered the little children to come unto Him and would not let His disciples forbid them to come? Who would not willingly serve Him who sat upon the well at Sychar to talk with the poor sinful woman till He had won her soul and made her into a zealous and successful home missionary? Who would not freely serve Him to whom publicans and sinners drew near, that He might woo them, with tender love, to forsake their sins? He is truly and Divinely royal! But He is also, as the children are taught to say—

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,”

so affable, generous, humane, benevolent, gracious, Godlike—that to be enlisted beneath His banner is to serve One who is, indeed, a Standard-Bearer among ten thousand! Yes, He is altogether lovely. We are not ashamed to be the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been some kings and princes whom a man might well be ashamed to serve—to have anything to do with such loathsome creatures as some despots are, would make a stain upon anyone’s character! But to come beneath the blessed servitude of Christ is to be honored indeed! The meanest scullion in His royal kitchen has more real glory than all the peers of the realm put together if they have not entered the service of our gracious King!

Further, this blessed King not only commends Himself to us by His Character, but also *by His relationship to us*. Surely it was because the Lord loved His people that He made Him to be King over them who is their Brother, for Jesus is our Brother. He was in all things made like unto His brethren and, while upon the earth, He was tempted in all points like as we are. But—“Now, though He reigns exalted high,” He is still our Brother, and He is not ashamed, even in Heaven, to call His people His “brethren”—

***“Though now ascended up on high,
He bends to earth with a Brother’s eye.
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.
Our fellow Sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains,
And still remembers in the skies,
His tears, and agonies, and cries.”***

He also comes, if possible, nearer than that, for He is our Husband—married to every believing heart, united with us in a conjugal union which never can be broken by divorce. Christ is the heavenly Bridegroom and each believing soul is His bride, as the whole Church of the redeemed is the bride, the Lamb’s wife. I may say to each Believer, in the words of the 45th Psalm, “So shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; worship you Him.” He not only reigns over us, but He loves us with such love that He even died for us! What other monarch ever did that for His subjects? You have seen the portraits of kings holding the globe and the scepter in their hands, wearing a crown, perhaps adorned with a wreath in token of their victories. But when our King puts on His royal regalia, when He comes forth in His coronation robes, I will tell you what are the chief ensigns of His sovereignty, the tokens of His universal dominion. They are the wounds in His hands, and in His feet, and in His side! He *deserves* to be our King and we delight to say to Him—

***“You have redeemed our souls with blood
Have set the prisoners free—
Have made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with Thee.”***

Truly, none who really know our Lord Jesus Christ can refuse to rejoice that the Father has so loved His people as to set the Savior, who did redeem them, to be King over them henceforth and forever.

I think I have said enough upon that point, so I will now turn to another side of the subject. Just to refresh your memories, I remind you that the first division was that the love of God has made Jesus our King.

II. Now we will shake the kaleidoscope and then we shall see the same Truth of God presented to us under another aspect—IT IS THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH HAS MADE US TO BE THE SUBJECTS OF KING JESUS.

There is love in the selection of the King who has been chosen for us, and there *is also love in the choice of His subjects*. It was certainly Divine Love which made a choice of Israel to be the subjects of Solomon because, if God meant to make a great king, and a wise king with wide do-

minions and vast influence, it was a very singular thing that He should choose the land of Israel to be the country over which Solomon should rule in such glory. Palestine was a poor, miserable little country, a very small district to be the center of so much splendor. And the people were not very numerous and they were very poor. Only a little while before they had been downtrodden by the Philistines. David, Solomon's father, had only just rescued them by the skin of their teeth from being slaves to the Philistines and, before that, they had been perpetually harried by all the neighboring nations, so that they never had any settled peace. Yet it was this little paltry nation that God chose to be ruled over by Solomon, to give it a name and make it the leading nation on the face of the earth!

Well, now, Beloved, what are we who have been chosen to be God's people? What are we that Christ should ever rule over us? Surely if He wanted to exercise dominion, He might have chosen the kings, queens, lords, dukes and the fine folk of earth! But you know how it is written, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence," Not even to the wise and prudent has He revealed the Truths of His Kingdom, but He has revealed them unto babes. "Even so, Father," said Christ, "for so it seemed good in Your sight." Surely it was because the Lord loved us that He put us under the dominion of Christ, that He might rule over us!

More than that, these people of Israel began with Solomon by a rebellion. You know how all through the reign of David, they were continually kicking against his rule. He had saved them from the Philistines, yet, at one time, they set up Absalom in opposition to him and, at another time, another pretender would come forth and they would follow him, for they seemed to wish to get rid of their best friend and deliverer! Even when David was near death, and Adonijah proclaimed himself king, Joab and Abiathar, and many of the people followed him, so that Solomon's reign began with rebellion! Yet he was set up as king over these traitorous and disloyal people—and what a mercy it is for us, who used to be rebels against our King—that the Lord Jesus Christ ever admitted us under the sway of His scepter!

I need not go into the details of what we used to be. It will bring tears to the eyes of some of us if we only think of what we once were. Lord, what a rebellious wretch I was! Many here had to fight against conscience, to fight what was against everything good in order to remain as they were! Yet they did remain as they were until the Lord so loved them that He subdued them, by His Grace, and brought them to His feet! With almighty love He came to them, broke down all their opposition and made them willing in the day of His power! I am sure that if any of you are rejoicing in being Christ's subjects, you will ascribe it to the love of

God and not to your own will, or to your own goodness, that you ever came to bow at Jesus' feet, for no man ever comes there of himself. They are drawn by Divine Grace and then they run, but never does a soul crouch at the feet of Jesus, crying for mercy and taking Him to be its King except by an act of Almighty Grace which leads the sinner to that happy and blessed decision! So let us give all the praise to God if we belong to the Kingdom of Jesus, for it is Love, amazing Love that has put us under such gracious Sovereignty as that.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, we are happy, indeed, for it is with us as it was with Israel. For, *after Solomon was once settled on the throne, there was no more rebellion.* In his God-given wisdom, he so ruled the nation that all was quiet and peaceable. After he had once climbed up into the saddle, he could not be thrown out of it. And after King Jesus once gets into the throne of our heart, stubborn wills and rebellious passions must lie still, for Jesus knows how to rule. What wonderful order Solomon set up! What remarkable peace the people enjoyed! What extraordinary prosperity they had! For "the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones."

And, Beloved, Christ has made us to be so rich, so happy, so contented, so blessed, that we have no wish to escape from His dominion, but rather does each of us cry, "O Jesus, subdue me more completely! Drive out all my old enemies! Root out my sins! Hunt them down like traitors and hang them up to die—and You alone rule and reign over me absolutely. In the entire kingdom of my nature, over my whole spirit, soul and body, You be the supreme and only Lord! And let no rebellion be so much as thought of." But it must be the love of God that will effect this—we cannot do it ourselves. It is the Grace of God—the mighty Love of God in Christ Jesus—that will subdue our spirit to the dominion of Christ! And in so far as He has already done it, let us praise and bless Him and, in any respect in which the gracious work is not yet fully accomplished, let us cry to Him to complete it.

III. I conclude my discourse with the third point, which is simply another view of the same Truth—OUR LOVE TO GOD NOW MAKES THE REIGN OF CHRIST OVER US TO BE VERY BLESSED, INDEED. Since we have been taught to love the Lord Jesus Christ, it has become a great delight to us to be under His dominion.

First, Brothers and Sisters, *the courts of Christ are our home.* In this House of Prayer, the Lord has often revealed Himself to us. Some of us feel that when we get into our places and join in holy worship, it is the best spot beneath the sun. I know that it is so by the way in which you strive to get here on Monday evenings and Thursday nights. Many of you are glad, then, as well as on the Sabbath, to steal away for a little while out of the world and even, perhaps, out of the worry of the household. And because our Lord Jesus Christ manifests Himself to you, here this place becomes to you the very palace of the great King—and you love to be here.

There are some hearers who must have a very grand place of worship and a very soft seat in it—and very eloquent preaching—and even then they soon drop off to sleep! But a true child of God who loves his Savior with all his heart, says, “I can stand anywhere. I do not mind being squeezed up in a corner so long as I can hear about Jesus—

***‘Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me in Immanuel’s name.’***

That is right, Brother, Sister! Keep on playing that tune! Praise the name of Jesus! Let that be the theme of all your music! Ring again, and again, and again, those sweet silvery bells that sound out—

‘Free Grace and dying love.’

You may hold me by the ears and by the heart, too, as long as you play such music as that! Even though there is no eloquence in the speaker, and he only talks straight on and tells what he knows of Jesus in his own heart, I will sit, or I will stand anywhere if I may but hear the strains of that blessed melody! And I know that many of you say the same. I can tell that you do by the look on your faces and I also know how I feel, myself, when, now and then, it is my privilege to listen to a sermon full of Christ. That is what causes tears of joy to flow and makes me feel, “I know that I am the Lord’s, for I do rejoice in the music of His charming name.” Yes, He is such a King to us that His courts are the place of our highest delight! And we are never happier than when we are among even the meanest of those who gather within His palace gate. We often feel that we would rather be doorkeepers in the House of our God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We also realize that it is God’s Love that made Jesus to be our King, for *His service has come to be our best recreation*. I heard a young man say, in a railway carriage, “I do not like the English mode of spending Sunday. I think Sunday ought to be devoted to recreation—everybody needs recreation.” An old gentleman who sat opposite to the one who made this remark, spared me the trouble of replying to him by saying, “I think, my dear Sir, it is very likely that you need recreation, too.” “Yes,” answered the young man, “I certainly do.” “Ah!” said the other, “but perhaps you do not quite understand the word I used—*re-creation*—that is, being created anew, so as to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you were created again, the recreation that you would then desire would be of a different kind from that which you are now advocating.”

That was quite true, but even using the word, “recreation,” in the ordinary meaning of the term, we have found the service of God to be really a recreation to us. When you, my Brother, get a little spare time, I know that you feel it a pleasure to spend it in some form of service for Christ. Someone might say to you, “Well, I should think that you had had enough work with that quill-driving, or standing behind the counter, or toiling in that factory—and that when you get an hour to spare, you would go to bed, or take your ease in some form or other.” “No, I do not,” you reply. “I go and gather my class together, or call on my scholars in their homes and try to find out whether they have really given their

hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Well,” says the enquirer, “do you mean to say that you get recreation out of such work as that?” “Yes,” you reply, “I do,” and he says, “Then, you must be an odd fish!” Well, perhaps we are odd fish, but that is one of our highest sources of recreation! We find the service of Christ to be so blessed to us that we take our rest in it and if, sometimes, we get wearied in it, we can truly say that we do not get wearied of it. Our whole soul delights in it and we are resolved that we will serve our Savior as long as we have life and breath.

More than that, it has now become such a joy to us to serve our King that *His revenue has become our riches*. Solomon’s subjects were very heavily taxed, yet their very taxes were a proof of their prosperity. They worked at a high pressure in order to produce wealth. They were a poor people to begin with, but they grew rich under the plan which Solomon adopted. It was an expensive plan but, then, if they paid much in the way of taxation, it was because they had so much the more coming in, year by year. Silver and gold had become so plentiful that it was not at all a hardship that the people should help to pay for the efficient maintenance of the king’s postal service and all the other arrangements by which they were, themselves, enriched.

Now, our King has a great revenue with which we have nothing to do except to draw from it all that we need. Unbounded riches of Grace are stored up in Christ Jesus and He gives us liberty to take all that we require. As to anything that we present to Him, what little we can give, we count it our highest riches to offer to Him and, whenever we do give anything to the Lord, we find that He multiplies whatever we have left in our basket and store! But, if He did not do so, we would still delight to lay at His dear feet anything that we can—and we do not need Him to give it back to us. It is a delight and joy to us to have an opportunity of doing anything in His blessed service! It is no task to us, it is never irksome. Some of us—I do not know whether each one of us—can sing, with Dr. Watts—

***“All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all.”***

So, Brothers and Sisters, I hope it has come to this with many of us, that *Christ’s Cross is our crown*. We have fallen in love with it and we gladly bear it for His sake. The very hardships that we endure in connection with Christ’s Kingdom have become a joy to us! While, as for His Glory, that is now our honor and, as for Himself, He is our Heaven!

Thus have I spoken, all too feebly, concerning the King given to us by God in love. If there are any here who are not under the rule of Christ, I wish that they would, at any rate, give heed to my testimony that the service of Christ is the best service in the whole world! There is no other

that is worthy to be compared with it for a single moment. If you resolve to serve yourself, or to serve the world, or to serve pleasure, or to serve the devil, you will rue the day—you may depend upon it! There is one remarkable thing about the service of Christ which ought to have great weight with impartial observers. Many who have lived to serve the world have repented of their folly on their deathbeds—but there was never yet heard of even one instance of a Christian saying, when he was dying, “I am sorry that I have served Christ.” There never has been since the foundation of Christ’s Kingdom, one of His subjects who, when he was dying, said, “I am sorry that I did so much for Christ, that I was so earnest in His service, or so generous to His cause.” No, there never has been such a case and there never will be one!

I always say that it is the sign of a man having a good master when he tries to introduce his sons into the service of his employer. A man is not likely to complain of his master when he comes to him and says, “I would be much obliged to you, Sir, if you would take my two sons into your service.” It looks as if he had a good master when he talks like that! Well, that is my own case—it is my intense delight to see my two sons actively engaged in the service of my Master! He has been a good Master to me. I often wonder that He has not turned me off, yet I should have wondered still more if He had done so, because He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” All this while He has borne with my ill manners and put up with many imperfections in my service. I wonder that He is not tired of me, yet I have His own word for it that He will not turn me adrift, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” I must love Him! I must praise Him! And I wish that everyone else would enter the service of my blessed Lord and Master. If you would only give Him a trial, (by God’s Grace may you be led to do so!) you would never regret it. Ask any man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, whether He has ever regretted having done so—you will never find one who will say that he has!

Well, then, if we can all speak so well of our King, we think that common reason, if it were really reasonable, would lead men to say, “Can we not enter into this service, too?” I pray that God’s Grace may enable many of you to say this. Will you not seek to become His servant this very hour? The way into His service is by your becoming nothing and letting Him be your All-in-All. Any soldier can tell you how he gets into his sovereign’s service. What does he give in order that he may become a soldier? Give? Why, he gives nothing at all! He takes a shilling from the recruiting officer and that seals the act! That is the way to become a Christian—take the Lord Jesus Christ as your own! He gives you Himself, so trust Him and take Him, for thus you become His soldier, enlisted forever! He will teach you your drills. He will show you how to behave yourself in His service and He will give you a rich reward at the end of it. So may He bless each one of you, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 72:1-4.**

Verse 1. *Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness unto the king's son.* "Give the king Your judgments, O God." The right to reign was transmitted by descent from David to Solomon, but not by that means alone. Israel was a theocracy and the kings were but the viceroys of the greater King. Therefore the prayer that the new king might be enthroned by Divine right and then endowed with Divine Wisdom. Our glorious King in Zion has all judgment committed to Him. He rules in the name of God over all lands. He is King "Dei Gratia" as well as by right of inheritance. "And Your righteousness unto the king's son." Solomon was both king and king's son—so, also, is our Lord. He has power and authority in Himself and also royal dignity given Him of His Father. He is the righteous King. In a word, He is "the Lord our righteousness." We are waiting till He shall be manifested among men as the ever-righteous Judge. May the Lord hasten in His own time the long-looked-for day! Now wars and fights are even in Israel, itself, but soon the dispensation will change and David, the type of Jesus warring with our enemies, shall be displaced by Solomon, the prince of peace.

2. *He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with judgment.* "He shall judge Your people with righteousness." Clothed with Divine authority, he shall use it on the behalf of the favored nation, for whom he shall show himself strong, that they be not misjudged, slandered, or in any way treated maliciously. His sentence shall put their accusers to silence and award the saints their true position as the accepted of the Lord. What a consolation to feel that none can suffer wrong in Christ's Kingdom! He sits upon the Great White Throne, unspotted by a single deed of injustice, or even mistake of judgment—reputations are safe enough with Him!

"And Your poor with judgment." True wisdom is manifest in all the decisions of Zion's King. We do not always understand His doings, but they are always right. Partiality has been too often shown to rich and great men, but the King of the last and best of monarchs deals out even-handed justice, to the delight of the poor and despised. Here we have the poor mentioned side by side with their King. The Sovereignty of God is a delightful theme to the poor in spirit—they love to see the Lord exalted and have no quarrel with Him for exercising the prerogatives of His crown. It is the fictitious wealth, which labors to conceal real poverty, which makes men quibble at the reigning lord, but a deep sense of spiritual need prepares the heart to loyally worship the Redeemer King. On the other hand, the King has a special delight in the humbled hearts of His contrite ones and exercises all His power and wisdom on their behalf, even as Joseph in Egypt ruled for the welfare of his brothers.

3. *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.* "The mountains shall bring peace to the people." Thence, aforetime, rushed the robber bands which infested the country, but now the forts erected are there the guardians of the land and the watchmen publish far and near the tidings that no foe is to be seen. Where Jesus is,

there is peace—lasting, deep, eternal. Even those things which were once our dread lose all terror when Jesus is acknowledged as Monarch of the heart. Death itself, that dark mountain, loses all its gloom! Trials and afflictions, when the Lord is with us, bring us an increase rather than a diminution of peace.

“And the little hills, by righteousness.” Seeing that the rule of the monarch was just, every little hill seemed clothed with peace. Injustice has made Palestine a desert. If the Turk and Bedouin were gone, the land would smile again, for even in the most literal sense, justice is the fertilizer of lands and men are diligent to plow and raise harvests when they have the prospects of eating the fruit of their labors. In a spiritual sense, peace is given to the heart by the righteousness of Christ. And all the powers and passions of the soul are filled with a holy calm when the way of salvation, by a Divine Righteousness, is revealed. Then do we go forth with joy and are led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing.

4. *He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.* “He shall judge the poor of the people.” He will do them justice, yes, and blessed be His name, more than justice, for He will delight to do them good!

“He shall save the children of the needy.” Poor, helpless things, they were packhorses for others, and paupers, but their King would be their Protector. Happy are God’s poor and needy ones—they are safe under the wing of the Prince of Peace, for He will save them from all their enemies.

“And shall break in pieces the oppressor.” He is strong to smite the foes of His people. Oppressors have been great breakers, but their time of retribution shall come and they shall be broken themselves, Sin, Satan and all our enemies must be crushed by the iron rod of King Jesus! We have, therefore, no cause to fear, but abundant reason to sing—

***“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”***

It is much better to be poor than to be an oppressor, for both the needy and their children find an Advocate in the heavenly Solomon, who aims all His blows at haughty ones and rests not till they are utterly destroyed!

—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.**

TO THOSE WHO FEEL UNFIT FOR COMMUNION NO. 2131

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

“For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the Passover lambs for everyone that was not clean to sanctify them unto the Lord. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying ‘The good Lord pardon everyone that prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord listened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.’”
2 Chronicles 30:17-20.

BRETHREN, *it should be much to our joy that we do not serve under the ceremonial Law, nor live within the legal dispensation.* The legal economy exhibited to the people a multitude of types and figures and consequently it laid down many rules and rituals—and these were enacted with such solemn and terrible penalties that the people were in constant fear of offending and found obedience irksome by reason of the weakness of their flesh and the unspirituality of their minds. As for our Lord Jesus, His yoke is easy and His burden is light. But concerning the Law, even Peter speaks of it as “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.”

We are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, a liberty which those who had been in the bondage could best appreciate. Those who are still under legal restrictions feel the pressure of them when they see the liberty of others. Sitting at dinner with a Samaritan who considered himself under the Law of the Pentateuch, I noticed that the worthy man refused first one dish and then another, and at length he exclaimed, “*Moses very hard,*” evidently feeling that the limit upon his diet involved a good deal of self-denial.

Some of us could cheerfully bear such small matters as abstinence from certain meats and drinks, but if we were surrounded with regulations and prescriptions entering into minute details, our life would be full of cares and we should feel ill at ease. *We have attained the liberty of the Gospel* and we are not called upon to observe days, and months and years—nor to border our garments with a certain color, nor to trim our hair by rule. Neither are we called to practice different washing and purifying, or to observe laws and regulations amounting to a continual round of rites. The “free Spirit” dwells in us—to us every place is hallowed!

Our religion is not of the outward and in the matter of meats we call nothing common or unclean. We have ordinances, it is true, but they are

few and simple. They are but *two* and each of them is instructive and easy. Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, *which are for the Lord's people only*, are easy of observance and are for our help and comfort, but are by no means burdensome. These are not laid upon us as yokes but given to us as *privileges*. Neither are they enforced by such a sentence as this—"The soul that forbears to keep the Passover shall be cut off from among his people."

Gospel ordinances are choice enjoyments, enjoined upon us by the loving rule of Him whom we call Master and Lord. We accept them with joy and delight. In keeping these commandments there is great reward—but they are not presented to us as matters of servitude. In Baptism we are made to see the burial of our Lord and are helped to enter into spiritual fellowship with Him therein—this is not a burdensome ordinance, but a delight! The Lord's own Supper is a joyful festival, a feast of fat things—of fat things full of marrow—of wines on the lees well-refined. All is joy and rest about these two ordinances.

In enjoying them we feel that we are not under Law, but under Grace. I would not have you come to this table with the same trembling with which an Israelite ate the Passover, or stand there as the Israelite did, with your loins girt and your staff in your hand, eating in haste and apprehension. No, but you may sit at ease, or even recline to express the rest which you enjoy at the Lord's Table and the close communion to which your Redeemer invites you. He has called you His friends and He has honored you to be His table companions, to sit and feast with Him without reserve.

Lest liberty should degenerate into license, I am bound to remind you that *we are not left without command and direction*. The Law of Love is as binding on us as ever the Law of Works could have been. We are still called to obedience—the obedience of faith. A most strict but most happy service grows out of sonship and no true son wishes to disown it. Should not the son honor his Father? Does not the Lord Himself say, "If I am a father, where is My honor?" There is a service of which we read that God spares such a one, "as a man spares his own son that serves him."

We are not under the Law, but yet we are not without law to Christ—and concerning these ordinances which I have described as the privilege of the Lord's free men, there is an order of the Lord's house and a discipline of His family which must by no means be set aside by the loving child. We are not slaves fearing the lash, but we are sons who have a filial fear of grieving our heavenly Father. The rules concerning the Passover and the right keeping of that high festival were plain and definite—and to break them would have been a great offense to the God of Israel. These rules required a certain ceremonial cleanness on the part of all who partook of the Paschal lamb and those who were defiled were kept back so that they could not present the offering of the Lord in its appointed season. The sacred rite was not to be celebrated in heedless formalism, but with a careful cleansing out of the old leaven that they might keep the feast aright.

Now, concerning the memorial Supper of the Lord, we have no rubric as to the bread or the wine and no prescribed regulation as to posture or manner of procedure. But there are certain notes of guidance which we shall do well to follow with loving care. For instance, when we come to this Table of the Lord, it should not be without a preparedness of heart for it—“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup.” To come here irreverently, or with sinister motive, is to secure condemnation! To come here idly and carelessly is to lose the blessing.

We should approach the Table with hearts full of humility, gratitude, faith and expectation. We should receive the bread and wine with sincere longing after fellowship with Christ, tender love to His blessed Person and great joy in His finished work. If we do not thus partake of the sacred feast we shall miss its high design.

Yet, nevertheless, since I fear that there may be a certain number here tonight of the Lord’s own people who are in the condition of the multitude in Hezekiah’s day out of Manasseh and Zebulun—who have not sufficiently cleansed themselves after the manner of the purification of the sanctuary—I am anxious to show them how they may, even now, come to the Divine ordinance and realize profit from it through the abundance of Divine Grace. God helping them, from this moment they may commence the necessary preparedness of heart and may speedily attain to it. So long as they do sincerely wish to meet with God and to enjoy fellowship with Him in His ordinance, there is no reason why they should retire from the assembly of the saints.

They may begin, even now, I say, to make ready for this festival and by Divine Grace they may so partake of this Supper as to find in it all that their hearts desire. Our Lord is able, by His Spirit, to wash away their present defilement and quicken them in mind and soul so that they may both draw near to God with true heart and discern the Lord’s body with clear understanding. Such is the power of Divine Grace, that in a few moments the Lord can take away all iniquity and receive us graciously! Our Great High Priest, in the sacred authority of His Divine office, can confer perfect cleansing and give us full right to sit with the family and partake of the Lamb and to rest beneath the roof, whose door has been marked for safety by the sprinkled blood.

I. So I will begin by saying, first, that as in the case before us in the text, so at this very time, **THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN WE FEEL UNFIT FOR THE SACRED ORDINANCE OF THE LORD’S TABLE.** It may be that at this hour there are many in the congregation who are not sanctified for the feast and are not cleansed according to the due order. I speak not of you all—there are choice spirits in this place who “walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and have fellowship with God perpetually—so that the blood of Jesus cleanses them from all sin.

Why should we not *all* seek this acceptable preparedness so that we may never be unfit for the most hallowed of all engagements? Ought we ever to be unfit for our Lord’s Table? Those two disciples who walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus talking together by the way—what a mercy it was

that when their Lord asked them the manner of their conversation they could give this for their short answer—"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth"! Could you answer in such commendable style when you talk together?

Consider, my Brothers and Sisters, and answer to your consciences. It is well to be in such a condition that in our common talk we are still keeping near to Jesus of Nazareth. The transition from our private dialogue to our Lord's actual company and even to His being made known unto us in the breaking of bread should be just like the gliding of a stream from one part of its channel to another as it hastens its constant flow towards the boundless sea. I fear that many of us have to complain of ourselves at times that we feel unfit for *any* holy thing—but most of all for the solemn engagements of this hallowed ordinance.

Let us think of the ways in which the Israelites were rendered unfit for the Passover and see how far they tally with our unfitness for the Supper. *Some were kept away by defilement.* Read in Numbers, 9th chapter, 6th verse—"And there were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day." For these men it was provided that they should keep the Passover a month later, but they were to keep it without fail. Read the 9th and 10th verses—"And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord."

I am afraid that you and I touch a great many dead bodies and are often defiled. You cannot go out to your business tomorrow morning but you will meet with that spiritual death which loads with corruption the air of "this present evil world." The dead in sin lie all around us—contact with their ways and motives, unless we are continually cleansed by Divine Grace—is defiling in many ways. Worse, still, we cannot even stay at home without finding sin in our own dwellings. Yes, the mass of sin within your own selves, "the body of this death," as Paul calls it, is a constant source of defilement.

Some quickness of temper, or levity of language, or excess of care, or thought of pride, or desire of covetousness will occur. Oh, that we were delivered from the liability! These dead and corrupt things lie not only in a corner but on the table, in the bed and everywhere—and when we touch them we are defiled. Whatever kind of sin it may be, whether of act, or of word, or of thought, or of imagination, or desire, it defiles more than most men imagine. Oh, that those who prate about perfection knew their own uncleanness! It were for their humbling, if they knew the sadly all-pervading influence of evil. How shall we pass through this huge morgue of a world, so full of everything that is corrupt, without becoming daily defiled? There are sins even in our holy things! Who shall deliver us?

A sense of defilement sadly tends to hinder fellowship. I know that if you are laboring, tonight, under a sense of sin you do not feel the joyful liberty you would desire in coming to the hallowed Table of your Divine Lord. You long to have that sense of defilement sweetly removed by the

application of the precious blood which cleanses from all sin. Thank God, that sacred purification is always available! You can at once wash and be clean and know yourself to be “accepted in the Beloved.” Thus may you eat the Passover even “as it is written.” But in any case, even if burdened with sin, the Lord does not forbid you to remember the death of His dear Son. Like the men of Ephraim you shall find pardon.

Perhaps, however, you are not conscious of having fallen into any known sin, but you feel like one who is not at home with God—even at some measure of a distance from Him. You are out of your usual walk and rest. That calm and holy frame—that perfect peace which once you enjoyed from hour to hour has gone from you. Thus you have about you, spiritually, the second disqualification for the Passover. When a man *was on a journey afar off* he could not keep the Passover. The Passover was a *household* institution. It required a house wherein the lamb could be slain and prepared for eating and a door where the lintel and two side posts could be sprinkled with blood so that, when a man was moving rapidly from place to place and had no house where to sojourn, he could not observe the holy festival.

Even thus, when you and I are out of our usual abode in Christ Jesus and are wandering in anxiety, care and doubt, we do not feel able to commune with our Lord as our hearts would desire. Brethren, do we not sometimes flit to and fro, like Noah’s dove, finding no rest? How hard, then, is it to get into the full teaching of this holy Supper! It is well to sing, “Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” But till the prayer is answered the ordinance is not enjoyed. The heart’s blood of the Eucharist is nearness to God—and when we are afar off it is a poor, dead ceremony. Its crown and joy is *rest*—and if we are tossed to and fro like the locust and are like a rolling thing before the whirlwind—what use can we make of the mere form of the feast?

Then are we very sadly disqualified for the sweets of communion and feel disposed to go home and leave the holy feast to others. Yet such going home would be painful, and might even be injurious. O Lord, what shall Your servants do? We feel like men on a battlefield and this ordinance is as green pastures where the sheep feed and lie down while the Shepherd comes among them, manifesting Himself to them. Gracious Lord, quiet the inward warfare and make us to lie down, as says the Psalmist, “He makes me to lie down,” for if You do not thus give us rest, we shall trample down even these holy pastures and grieve Your Spirit!

Beloved Friends, some of you have come here tonight weary with the greatness of the way. You have been on a journey all this week and you came to a halt on Saturday night afar off from that spirit of devotion which you should cultivate. Life of late has been full of troubles and perplexities. I pray the Lord to give you sweet rest at this moment and bring you near to Himself. “Cast your care on Him; for He cares for you.” Lay your burdens down at the foot of the great Burden-Bearer’s Cross. Be quiet even as a weaned child. At the same time, cry unto the Well-Beloved, “Draw me, we will run after You” and, before you are aware, your soul

shall make you “like the chariots of Amminadab.” If you cannot come to the Beloved, He can come to you, “leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills” and all your distance and disquiet will cease at once—so shall you keep the feast.

It may so happen that up to this moment you have been in an evil case *from unknown causes*. You cannot say how or why, but certainly it is not with you as in days past. Marring influences not mentioned in the Book of Numbers and possibly not mentionable at all—but none the less real for all that—may have been keeping you from eating the spiritual Passover to your heart’s content and may now tend to keep you from a truly happy approach to the Lord’s Table in spirit and in truth. Whatever the cause may be I want you to confess it frankly, just as those men in Numbers confessed to Moses that they had touched a dead body. So far as you know the cause of defilement and division, admit it. Look at the mischief as best you can and mourn over it as far as it is sinful.

Then carefully put it away from you, so far as it is a matter of care or distrust, and labor earnestly at this moment to prepare your heart to seek the Lord your God—even though you cannot quite feel that you are cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary—I mean even though you do not feel in the best possible frame of mind for holy fellowship. Some *supposed disqualifications* may be removed by an act of *faith* or by a fuller knowledge. Do you fear to come because you have such little faith? May not the little children have their supper as well as the grown sons? Are not these precisely the members of the family who most need to be fed and comforted? The utter *absence* of faith could shut you out, but not the *feebleness* of it.

Come, you little one! To you I say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside?” Do you hesitate because your joy is not now overflowing? Is this a sufficient reason for refusing to obey the command, “This do in remembrance of Me”? Were the 12 full of joy at the founding of this feast? Had they no questions, saying, “Lord, is it I?” May not the feast, itself, furnish the joy? Is not the Lord of the feast your exceeding joy? If you cannot bring joy with you, come that you may *find* it here! Do you say, I am spiritually weak in all points? Again I ask, is that a reason why you should not feed on the best of food? It seems to me that it is a chief reason why you should feed often and heartily!

“Eat you that which is good” is a safe prescription for you and a generous invitation from your Lord. Greatly you need it—freely take it! The supply of heavenly bread is intended for those who are faint. “He has filled the hungry with good things.” He will fill you! Do you complain that you feel so useless? This is a deplorable *fact*—but what has it to do with the matter in hand? Are you to come to your Lord’s Table because you are *useful* to Him? No, but that the Lord Jesus may be useful to you! Surely this is not a wage, but a provision of free Grace. You do not *bring* the feast—your part is to *receive* it. So you can only become useful to Christ as Christ is abundantly useful to you! You cannot help to feed the multi-

tude till your Lord first puts the bread into your hands. Come, now, and take what He has blessed.

I know that for many reasons the choicest saints at times deem themselves disqualified for this holy banquet and I have sometimes thought that that is not altogether an ill feeling. At any rate, it is a symptom of many healthy things. If I felt myself worthy in any sense except the *Scriptural* one, I should infer from my self-satisfaction that I was unworthy. This Table is no place for Pharisees. Where the Savior presides there may come *none* but sinners saved by His Grace. If you have merits of your own which you can boast and no sin to confess, you are not the man for whose salvation the Substitute has shed His precious blood! How could He atone for those who have no fault?

But if you are a *sinner*, you are the sort of person whom Jesus came to save. Jesus is the sinner's Friend. He will be yours if you go to Him in that capacity. How can we commemorate the shedding of His blood unless we daily feel that we have solemn need to be washed by it? How can we remember Him except as we see how we derive all from Him? Jesus is never seen to be a full Christ except by those who feel their own emptiness apart from Him. He is never prized at a true value by those who have a high esteem of themselves. A broken heart knows best His power to comfort. A bleeding heart sees best His power to heal. If you are sensible of your *unworthiness* you are *not* unworthy in the Scriptural sense, but may freely come.

For my own part, I enjoy my holiest seasons when my heart lies low before the Lord. No communion is more intensely sweet than that which washes His feet with tears and covers them with kisses of penitential love. When I have been most ashamed of myself, my Lord has been most glorious in my eyes. When I have, in shame, covered my face, He has, in love, uncovered His own Countenance. Come, then, you weeping saints, for I know that you seek Jesus—and you are such as He welcomes to His table! Bring your disqualifications and turn them into confessions of sin! And these, by increasing your hunger—will enable you the better to enjoy the provisions of that sacred Table where Jesus is both the Host and the Food—the bread and the wine and yet the Master of the feast.

Thus much upon those hindrances and disqualifications. It is not a cheering theme.

II. But now, secondly, though we feel and lament our lack of preparation, **WE MAY STILL COME TO THE FEAST.** Let us, to some extent, follow in the tracks of the men of Hezekiah's time. *They forgot their differences.* The one nation had been torn into two and even in Hezekiah's time there was ill feeling between Ephraim and Judah. But the king of Judah overlooked his boundaries and we read that the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun—and many of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.

Political and personal feuds were forgotten. They were one family and they recognized the relationship—and gathered to the one table. I trust

none of us are at variance with others—but if we are—let us make peace at once! This we can do on the spot—let us put away every angry and unkind thought. From this foul stuff let all our bosoms be purged at once. The memorials of our dying Lord have slain all our enmity and given life to our love. This will be a great help towards coming fitly to the Table.

We read that when the tribes assembled *they removed the idols*. They took all the altars that were in Jerusalem and cast them into the brook Kidron. This was a fine beginning for men who did not feel quite up to the mark. Come, Brethren, let us tear down our altars of creature worship, cut down the groves of carnal confidence and break up the graven images of unholy love. If there is anything in our heart that has usurped our Lord's place, let us each one to himself sing very softly this verse—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne
And worship only You.”***

NOW, open your heart to Jesus and give Him all your love! He is worthy of much more. Young man, have you any ambitions that are apart from Christ's glory? Break them as with a sledge hammer at this moment! Christian man, have you any glory apart from the Cross of Jesus? At this moment crucify it! Nail your glory to His Cross and have done with it. Dear Sister, are there any loves of yours that are alien to the love of Christ? Have you any secret delight which you could not expose to His view? Any alabaster box which you would not cheerfully break for Him? Come, cast away all idols! You cannot keep the feast aright till this, at least, is done—but this accomplished—you may observe it with gladness!

How I long to hear the breaker's hammer going! Can it not be done at once? Unless those idols have been so long set up in your heart that there is a question whether you love the Lord at all they will readily fall from their pedestals. If you love Jesus, your spirit will make your hands quick at this sacred iconoclasm till you shall have broken down every image which now defiles the temple of your soul! That done, those who were not all that they desired to be, yet *endeavored to prepare their hearts*. “Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers.”

Do you long to seek God tonight? Then there is access for you! I can truly say for myself that I long, above everything, to meet with my God and Savior at the Table. Though I am in myself unworthy, yet I cannot live without my Lord. I must have Him and nothing else will satisfy me short of fellowship with Him. No outward sign, no bread, no wine, no fellowship with God's people will content me—my heart is hungering for her Savior! My Lord, my God, my heart cries after You! As the thirsty hart in the wilderness pants for the water brooks, so does my heart cry out for God, the living God! Is it so with you? Surely the best sort of preparation is already commencing in your soul. Let your heart take its full of this longing and pining—that is the way in which you will be enabled to come to the sacred Table without being an intruder and without missing the blessing.

Note, next, that Hezekiah *made open and explicit confession unto God* that these people were not as they should have been. He did not excuse them. He came before God and cried, “The good Lord pardon everyone that prepares his heart.” Herein is wisdom. If our hearts are longing after God, let us confess our neglect of meditation, our failure in private prayer, our forgetfulness of self-examination and our failure in all those other preparations which are so appropriate to this blessed memorial of our Lord. Thus drawing near, with sorrow and regret and with the humble resolve that in the future your heart shall endeavor to dwell nearer to the Lord—and further off from the defiling influences of a dead world—you will in spirit and in truth commune with Him who never yet sent a penitent from His Presence without saying, “Peace be unto you.”

Confession made, *let prayer ascend to Heaven*—“The good Lord pardon every one of us everything in which we have been lax, or deficient, or erring. O You heart-searching God, forgive Your servants and accept us in Christ Jesus!” Thus purified and made white by instantaneous pardon, we need not hesitate to keep the feast. With holy desire have we desired to feed upon our Lord who is the true Passover—and He will not refuse us! Even to Laodicea He said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock”—even to those who dwell in that lukewarm Church He promises to sup with them, if they will but admit Him!

And therefore we are sure that He will sup with us—even with us—though we come blushing and with shame upon our faces.

III. We come, in the last place, to notice, that IN SO COMING, WE MAY EXPECT A BLESSING. If we do but come with a prepared heart and great longing of soul, even though we confess ourselves to be disorderly and have to plead with the Lord to forgive our unfitness, yet He will, without fail, meet with us and enrich us with the blessing which we seek. God’s ways of acting are the same in all ages and if Hezekiah and his people won the blessing and “praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord,” even *we* may look for the same joy and holy exultation!

We read that they “kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with *great gladness*.” Beloved, I want you to enter into that great gladness tonight! If there is any place where we are bound to be glad, it is at the Lord’s Supper. Remember, this is no *funeral* feast—it is no memorial of one who lies rotting in the grave. Here we remember that Jesus died, but we also bear those prophetic words, “Until I come.” He lives! And He shall shortly come with all the glory and majesty of Heaven to claim the kingdoms as His own and to judge the nations in equity. Therefore have we joy as we come to the Table.

It is a memorial of a death by which the life of myriads was purchased. It is the memorial of a great struggle which ended in the most glorious of all victories! “It is finished,” is the banner which waves over us. Such a victory is a joy forever—let it be gladly commemorated. Here we celebrate the feast of pardoning love delighting itself in being enabled justly to spare the guilty! Here is the feast of redeemed bondsmen, the jubilee of emanci-

pation from everlasting slavery! We come here as those that are alive from the dead to feast with Him, who, in very truth was slain but who has risen again and has become our Life and our Joy!

Oh, for a well-tuned harp! Bring an instrument of ten strings and the psaltery and let every string be awakened to ecstasy on behalf of Jesus—to set forth in worthy notes His passion and His triumph. There was great gladness in Israel, even among the men of Ephraim who were not ceremonially fit to keep the Passover. And following upon this, there was great praise to God. They continued singing unto the Lord all the day! The Levites and the priests and the people joined with them and they brought forth loud instruments to add to the volume of their music. Notice the words, “singing with loud instruments unto the Lord.” They employed everything by which to express their overflowing gratitude—their glowing joy!

I pray that my Lord’s servants may fetch out their loud instruments tonight to sing unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Let us lift up the song, “Worthy is the Lamb, for You were slain and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood. You shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Unto Your name be hallelujahs throughout eternity.” Oh, for the cymbals, the high-sounding cymbals that, with their mighty clash, we might express something of the overpowering joy of our spirit before the living God!

Brothers and Sisters, these were the very people who kept the Passover, “not according as it was written.” They came ill-prepared, unpurified and utterly unfit—but God blessed them and helped them to get ready for the holy feast then and there—and I trust He will do so now to those who desire it. How much I long that all of you Christians—half-asleep Christians, lukewarm Christians of a doubtful sort, Christians whose right to commune is gravely questioned by yourselves—I long that you may be quickened right now by the Holy Spirit, who is still in the midst of the Church, that you may at once delight yourselves in the Lord and feel a holy nearness to Christ and a heavenly exhilaration at the mention of His name! So will you eagerly praise the Beloved of your soul and bid all that is within you bless His holy name!

Added to this, in the Passover in Hezekiah’s days, there was *great communion with God*, at least the outward sign of it, for “they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers.” In those sacrifices other than sin offerings, a part was put on the altar for God and a part was given to the priest and the worshipper to feast upon that they might thus, in symbol, hold fellowship with God. Oh, for a measure of hallowed fellowship with God at this time! Many of you know what it means. If you do not, I cannot explain it to you. You must taste and see for yourselves. May it be with us tonight as it was with the elders on the side of Sinai, of whom it is written, “They did see God and did eat and drink.”

What a wonderful combination! Yet what an instructive conjunction! “They did see God and did eat and drink.” Oh that we might eat and drink with our Lord at this time as men eat with their friends! May we now see

that Face which no earthly eye can see! May we hear that Voice which sounds not in mortal ears but penetrates the soul! Oh, that we may see Him who is invisible! We may do so even now—I mean even you who feel least prepared can yet enjoy this supreme delight!

Oh that you may do so till you assure me that I have not told you the half of what you now taste and feel! I pray the Lord that the soft south wind may blow warmly across this congregation till all the winter is gone from your spirits and you feel the icebergs within your souls dissolved and running away in streams of praise and gratitude to Him who has loved you of old and now manifests Himself to you! There is a secret charm, a silent energy of the Holy Spirit, which, in quiet, He can exert over the minds of His people. I pray that you may know it now, even you that are least prepared for the engagement which at this moment lies before us.

Then there came upon the people *a great enthusiasm*, inasmuch that they resolved to have another seven days of holy convocation, just as Solomon did when they consecrated the temple. We are told, “they took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness.” I love to find people so possessed with the Spirit of God that they say, “That service was by far too short. I wish it had kept on for another hour.” I love to see them lingering, as if they could not quit a place in which they have been so greatly blessed. How pleasant to go away, not loathing but longing and watching till another Sabbath shall come, that we may hear again of the same sacred matter and feel again the same dew from the Lord!

How we tremble lest the heavenly blessings should be withdrawn! For we feel that we can no more command them than we could bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion. Since we have been in the sacred chambers of the King, we have feared lest our golden keys should be missing so that we could not enter into His treasury again, or again approach His seat. You know how you feel when your heart sings of the place—

**“Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”**

When you long for that protracted worship it shows that God is very present with you—and it was so with the people in Hezekiah’s days, who, nevertheless, were at first *unprepared* for the Paschal festival! May you who are now dull become so joyous that you are eager to turn a seven days’ feast into fourteen! May your enthusiasm know no bounds! May you rise as on wings of eagles and maintain your highest soaring for many a day!

Furthermore, this brought about *a great liberality*. Everybody wanted to offer sacrifices! Everybody was anxious to feed his poorer brethren—the king gave a thousand bullocks and 7,000 sheep—and the princes would not be outdone by him! They must go just a touch beyond him, for they gave a thousand bullocks and 10,000 sheep! Meanwhile, a host of priests came and more fully surrendered themselves to the service of Jehovah, their God. How I wish that such a result would follow the present service!

Oh that many of you would give largely of your *substance* to the cause of God and may others give *themselves* more fully to the great Master's service!

From this time forth may devoted men and consecrated women be found in all our families and may the kraals of Africa and the zenanas of India be the better for it. Did you observe in the reading how the people finished the festival? They had *another great breaking of idols*. The hammers gave forth their music again and the images went to pieces. All that which was displeasing to God became displeasing to the people and they swept it away! That was the finale, for when God goes up, the devil goes down! As sure as ever you love God, you must *hate* idols. You cannot rejoice in Him and yet rejoice in the world, the flesh and the devil.

What sacred jealousy, what holy revenge, what destruction of every evil thing within the soul is sure to follow when the Beloved unveils His charming face and all our soul is melted with the beams of His love! Nothing hastens sanctification like communion with God! May this Table be to all of you the place of your renewed trust with Jesus! May you again take Him by the hand and surrender to Him—while He shall take *you* by the hand and work in you all the good pleasure of His will! Let marriage vows with Jesus be repeated here. May our living union with Him become more consciously a matter of fact! May this be a sanctifying season!

May this be so even with you who were just now saying, "I do not think that I dare stop for the communion! I do not feel aright, nor desire aright. I am dead, stupid, heavy—and I fear I should only profane the sacred Table." Cry to the Lord as Hezekiah did! Mingle your confessions and your prayers before the Mercy Seat and may the good Lord pardon each one of you, even though you are not purged after the purification of the sanctuary as you could desire! The Lord bless His waiting people, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Numbers 9; 2 Chronicles 30.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—337, 814, 457.**

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REFORM

NO. 238

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 13, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the images in pieces and cut down the groves and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all.”
2 Chronicles 31:1.***

IT is a pleasant sight to behold the thousands assembled together for the worship of God, but it is lamentable to reflect how often the reverence which is exhibited in the sanctuary is lost when the thresh-hold is passed. How frequently the most earnest address of the preacher is forgotten and becomes as “the morning cloud and as the early dew.” We very often go up to the House of God and imagine that we have done our duty when we have gone through the round of the service—self-satisfied, we return each man to his home. Oh that we would remember that the preaching of the Gospel is but the sowing! Afterward the reaping must come.

Today we do, as it were, lay the first stone of an edifice. And henceforward that edifice must be built, stone by stone, through your daily practice, until at last the top stone is brought forth with shouts of joy and gladness. Well said the Scotch woman, when her husband asked her, on her return from the House of God sooner than usual, “Wife, is the sermon all done?” “No, Donald,” said she. “It is all said. But it is not begun to be done.” There was wisdom in her pithy saying, a wisdom which we too frequently forget. *Praying* is the end of preaching.

Reformation, conversion, regeneration—these are the ends of the ministry and a holy life should be the result of your devout worship. We have read in your hearing the story of the great Passover, which was held in the days of Hezekiah. One almost envies the men of that time. We might almost wish that we could be carried back some thousands of years, that we might have been there to see the solemn sacrifices, to behold the priests, as with joyous countenances they sang the praises of God and to have mingled in that countless throng, which stood at one hour to listen to the Levite, at another hour gathered round the priest—again, at another season clapped their hands for joy at the sound of the golden trumpets—and then were louder than the trumpets by the magnificent sound of their vocal praise.

But, Beloved, when that scene had vanished and the multitude had gone to their homes, Hezekiah might have sat down and wept if there had not been a fitting effect from so great a gathering. Isaiah the Prophet, I doubt not, was one of the most glad in all the crowd. Oh, how his noble heart beat for joy and how eloquent was his seraphic tongue when he preached among the people and cried, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters and he that has no money; come you, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." But sad, indeed, would his heart have been, notwithstanding all the delightful excitement of the day, if he had not seen some glorious consequences result from the ministrations and from the great gatherings of the people. In our text we are informed that the Passover did not end with the seven days twice-told of its extraordinary celebration. The Passover, it is true, might end, but not its blessed effects.

Now there are three effects which ought always to follow our solemn assembly upon the Lord's Day, especially when we gather in such a number as the present, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving. We should go home and first break our false gods. Next, cut down the very groves in which we have been desirous to delight. And after that break the altars which, though, dedicated to the God of Israel, are not according to Scripture and therefore ought to be broken down, albeit, they be even dedicated to the true God.

I. To begin then, the true result of all our gatherings should be, in the first place, to **BREAK TO PIECES ALL OUR IMAGES**. "You shall have none other gods before Me." Every place is before God. Every thing is before His face and open to Him. Therefore by this command we understand that we are in no way and in no sense to have another god, but the Lord our God. What? Do you ask, are we a nation of idolaters? Can this text pertain to us? Would not this be a proper rebuke to address the Hindustani, or to speak to the benighted inhabitants of the center of Africa? Might we not exhort them to serve Jehovah and to dash the gods of their fathers in pieces? Assuredly we might.

But imagine not that idolatry is confined to nations of a swarthy hue. It is not in Africa alone that false gods are worshipped—idols are worshipped in this land, also, and by many of you. Yes, all of us, until renewed by Divine Grace, worship gods which our own hands have made and we do not fear and love and obey the living God with our entire and exclusive homage. Once however, let Grace be received into the heart, let the soul be renewed by the Holy Spirit, once drink in the free life of Jesus and these false gods must be broken in pieces at once.

The first god who is worshipped among us is one called self-righteousness. The Pharisees were the high priests of this god. They burnt incense every morning and every evening before him, but he has ten thousand times ten thousand worshippers still left. Among your respectable classes of society he is the received Divinity. If a man is respectable, he thinks it all-sufficient. Among your moralists, this is the great god before which they bow down and worship. No, among sinners themselves, men whose character is not moral, there is, nevertheless, found an altar to this god within their hearts. I have known a drunkard self-righteous, for he has declared that he did not swear. And I have known a swearer self-righteous,

for he trusted he should be saved because he did not steal. Until we are brought to know our own lost and ruined condition, self-righteousness is the god before which everyone of us will prostrate ourselves. Oh, my dear Friends, if we have worshipped God in this house today, let us go home determined to aim a blow, by the help of God, at self-righteousness. Let us go home and prostrate ourselves before God and cry—"Vile and full of sin I am."

"Lord, I confess before You, that I have no good works in which to trust, no self-righteousness on which I can rely. I cast my boastings away. I come to You as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner. Lord, save me, or I perish." That is the way to dash down this god. Paul once worshipped this mighty one and worshipped him so well, that, after the "most strictest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee." Never, in his opinion, so good a man as himself. He served this god with all his mind and soul and strength. But, once upon a time, as he was going to Damascus to sacrifice to this god with the blood of Believers in Christ, the Lord Jesus looked upon him out of Heaven and said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Prostrate fell Saul and down went his self-righteousness, too. Afterwards, you might hear him say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." May we all go home thus and pull down our self-righteousness.

Stop a moment, I am not quite sure that we can do this all at once. My self-righteousness I feel in my own heart, as something like those colossal statues of Egypt. And when I try to break it in pieces, I can but disfigure it. I manage to break a chip off here and a chip off there, but still there stands the statue, not in all its former symmetry, but still there. At any rate, if you and I cannot wholly get rid of our self-righteousness, let us never lay down the axe and the hammer until we have destroyed it. Let us go home today and have another blow at this old foe. Let us go home to have another dash at the colossal god and let us take up the chisel and the hammer and once more try to disfigure him. This is the proper result of the ministrations of God's Word—to destroy and cut in pieces and utterly break down our self-righteousness.

There are other gods still worshipped in this world to be execrated with unrelenting indignation. There is one which is certain to be broken, so sure as ever a man becomes a Christian—I mean Bacchus, that jolly god whom so many adored in days of yore with mad revelry and who is still worshipped by tens of thousands of Englishmen. Perhaps he is the great god of Britain. I am certain he has many temples, for there is scarcely a corner of any street in which we do not behold his image, or see his votaries pouring out libations before him. He is a god that is worshipped with reeling to and fro and staggering. Men become drunk in his presence and so do him homage. Now, you that are drunkards, if you become Christians, that will turn your cup bottom upwards once and forever. There will be no more inebriety for you. By the Grace of God you will say, "They that are drunk are drunk in the night, but let us who are of the day be sober. I renounce this practice of drunkenness, I can have nothing more to do with it."

Bless God there are many here present who have gone out of this hall to demolish this god. Oh, if it were right to relate the cases that have been told

privately to us, we could tell you this very day, not of one, or two, or twenty but of hundreds, who, as we believe, once made their homes a Hell, who treated their wives with brutality and their children with neglect—whose homes were empty, because every article they had was sold for accursed drink. They have heard the Gospel not in word only, but also in power and now their home is a paradise, their house is made glad with prayer, their children are brought up in the fear of the Lord. We have seen the wife's tear of gladness when she said, "The Lord be blessed forever and blessed be the name of the Gospel, for a wretched woman has been made happy and she who was but a drudge and a slave to one who was like a fiend, has now become the companion of one whom she reckons to be little short of an angel." Yes, may this be the effect with some of you, for there are some such here today, I doubt not, who still worship this all-degrading deity, the deity of drunkenness.

Let me tell you of another god, which is to be pulled down as certainly by any man who worships Jehovah aright and that is the god of lust. Oh, this world is not so good as it seems to be. You scarcely hear the minister in these days talk of whoremongers, adulterers and such like—but they are not all dead. There are such to be found, such in every congregation, I fear. Our streets have not yet become such as chastity might pace at midnight, nor are the chief places of the earth become clean and purified. There is much hidden pollution to be dragged forth and cast into Kishon. Even in high places, sin is tolerated, men are respectable who have sent their fellow creatures to Hell and are going there themselves. But once let Grace come into the heart and away with these—the most darling lust is given up and that which was thought to be the greatest pleasure, is now looked upon with abhorrence and detestation. If you, my Hearer, live in lust and yet do make profession of religion, away with your profession, for it is an awful lie! Away with that profession, for it is an empty vanity! Away with it! It will but add to your destruction and cannot save you from the dreadful doom of the man that goes on in his iniquity. A happy thing it is for a man when he goes from the House of God with the resolve that lust shall be abandoned and every sinful pleasure cast away.

There are, too, the gods of business, but I must not touch upon them, of course. The minister has nothing to do with business, he is told. Keep your counting-house door bolted always, let not the minister inside. But the minister knows why he is shut out. Is it not because there are secrets of your prison which you would not have revealed? There are things done which pass for honest among tradesmen, that if put in the balance of the sanctuary are found very wanting. I would that the result of our preaching upon our hearers should be such that their actions should be more upright and their conduct more Christ-like in their daily business. I have heard of a woman who once went to hear a minister and when he called to see her on the Monday, he asked her what the text was. She replied, "It was a blessed sermon to me, Sir, but I forget the text." "Well, what was the subject, my good woman." "Oh, I do not know. I forget now." "Well," said he, "it cannot have done you any good then." "Yes it did," said she, "for though I forgot the sermon, I did not forget to burn my bushel when I got home." The fact was, she had a

bushel that gave false measure to her customers and although she forgot what the sermon was about, she did not forget to burn her false measure.

If any of you are in business and have false measures, though you may forget what I say, do not forget to break your yard measure and to have your weights set right and to remodel your business and “to do unto others as you would they should do unto you.” Break the gods of your business in pieces, if you have not followed with your whole heart the statutes of the God of Israel. If you cannot serve God in your daily business, then give such business up, or alter it so that you can.

Say now, who is there among us who has not some image to break? I have thought sometimes that I had broken all mine at one season, for I have had the will to do it. But lo, I have walked through the temple of my heart and I have seen in some dark corner an idol still standing. Let it is cast down, I have said. And I have used the sledgehammer upon it. But when I thought I had cleared all away, there was still one gigantic figure standing there. You may be sure that there is one idol of which we can never thoroughly cleanse our hearts though we try and though by God’s strength we give him a blow every day. It is the god of pride. He changes his shape continually. Sometimes he calls himself humility and we begin to bow before him, till we find we are getting proud of our humility. At another time he assumes the fashion of conscientiousness and we begin to carp at this and cavil at the other and all the while we are tampering with our own professed sanctity and are bowing before the shrine of religious pride.

We think sometimes we are praising God when we are praising ourselves and we pray at times that God may prosper us in doing good and our greatest desire is to be honored, not that His name should be glorified. This idol must be cast down. But it is of such a form and such a shape, that I suppose it will fare like Dagon. When the ark was brought into the house, it is said Dagon fell upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord and his head and the palms of his hands were cut off, nevertheless the stump of Dagon remained. So will it is with us. I fear the stump of Dagon will still remain, do what we may. Then let us each today go home to our closet and begin to open the door of the chambers of our hearts and walk through them all and say “What have I to break, what have I to knock down, what have I to destroy.” And let us be very careful that we do destroy all that we can get near. Oh my Hearers! how I wish we were more watchful of the effects produced in ourselves by preaching.

II. Let us now go a step further and consider what it is to CUT DOWN THE GROVES. Groves are the places where those images have been set up. There was nothing, mark you, positively sinful in the grove. There could not be anything wrong in a cluster of trees. They were very beautiful—they were the work of God—but they had been used for an idolatrous purpose and, therefore down they must come. Had some of the lax professors of this age been present, they would have said, “Break the god”—that is right enough. Hammer away at him, dash him to pieces, but don’t cut down the trees. You may use them for very proper purposes. Why, you may even go there to pray. There you may sit and refresh yourself and beneath their grateful shade you

may even worship the true God. “No,” say these reformers. “We will cut down the trees and all, because the images have been harbored under their cover.”

Now, I am going to lift the axe to clear away some of the trees, where some of you at least have defiled yourselves with the false gods of this world’s idolatry. The first grove of trees, at which I must strike, is the theater. I am told by some that in the theater there is much that might do good. There are plays, they inform me, that might be profitably heard and I believe there are. I am told, again, that there is something so pleasant, so agreeable, so interesting in them that one might be instructed there—and that especially do the plays of Shakespeare contain such noble sentiments, that a man must feel his soul elevated and his heart expanded while witnessing their performance. Nevertheless I will have this grove down, every bit of it. It is all very well for you to eulogize it. I will not argue with you. But false gods have been worshipped in these places and are being worshipped still—so hew down every tree of them. Oh, you would have them spared, would you? Why, which tree in the whole grove is undefiled by a harlot? Which theater in the world is not the very den and nest of abominable iniquity, obscenity and lust? Is it possible for any man to enter and come out of one of them without defilement? If it is possible, I suppose it is only so with men who are so bad that they cannot be made worse than they are and therefore cannot be defiled.

To the Christian mind, there is something hideous in the whole matter. He may believe that there were times when the theater might have been profitable. He looks back to the days of the Greeks and Romans and feels that then it might have been the lever of civilization. But since those old times, he finds that the devil has become the god of the theater and the god that is diligently worshipped there is none other than Beelzebub. And therefore he says, “No, if I am a Christian, by the Grace of God, I will never tread that floor again. Let others go there if they please. If they can find an interest under the shadow of its trees, let them sit there—but I remember, in the days when I went there, I worshipped Bacchus, I worshipped iniquities of every shape. For me to go there would be to put myself into temptation’s way. Therefore I will down with the tree, I abhor it. I pass by on the other side, rather than come in contact even with its shadow.”

Now, men may make what apologies they please, but the thing is clear to me, that no man can be a true child of God and yet attend those haunts of vice. I care not though I may be thought too severe. We had better use severity than allow souls to perish unwarned. God Himself has annexed to the theater the warning of your own destruction—for, staring you in the face, there is a hand with these words written—“To the pit.” And, true enough, it is the short cut to Hell and to the pit that is bottomless.

But there are other groves that must come down, too. There is the tavern—like the grove, a very excellent thing in itself. The tavern is needed in some places for the refreshment of travelers and the inn is a great advantage of civilization. But, nevertheless, the Christian man remembers that in the tavern false gods are worshipped. He remembers that the company of the taproom is not the fellowship of the saints, nor the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. The Christian

may have to go into the tavern, his business may sometimes take him there. But he will be like a man going through a shower of rain. He will carry an umbrella, while he is going through it and he will get out of it as soon as he can. So will the Christian do—he will try and guard himself against evil while he is there—but not one moment longer will he stay than imperative necessity demands. The tavern, I have said, was originally an institute of civilization and it is at this day a thing that cannot be given up, but, notwithstanding this, let no Christian, nor any pretender to Christianity, resort habitually to such places—nor let him sit down with the profane who generally assemble there. I believe there are Christian men who are often tempted into bad company by the benefit clubs and societies which are held in such places. If there are no benefit societies but those which are held in public houses, trust to God and have nothing to do with societies at all.

But there are others. And you are under no necessity whatever to injure and contaminate your character by connecting yourself with those who meet in such places and lead you into sin. “Well,” says one, “but I can do it and yet I am not hurt.” I dare say you can, I could not. If the coals did not burn me, yet they would blacken me. And, therefore, I would have nothing to do with them. There are some professors, however, who are like the old lady’s coachman. She advertised for a coachman and three waited on her. To one she said, “How near could you drive to danger?” “Madam,” he replied, “I could drive, I dare say, within six inches and yet be safe.” “Then you will not suit me at all,” said she. She asked the next, “How near can you drive me to danger?” “I would drive within a hair’s breadth.” “Then you will not suit me.” The third was asked, “How near can you drive to danger?” “Madam,” said he, “that is a thing I never tried. For I always drive as far off danger as ever I can.” She said, “Then you will suit me.” That is my advice to every professor of religion.

I must make the very same remark with regard to the pastimes, the childish pastimes and enjoyments of the rich and of those who meet for purposes, not of sin, but of what they call recreation. Dancing—the ball-room—is there anything sinful there? I say, No, no more than there was in the trees that surrounded the image. But nevertheless, I will cut the trees down, because of their association with the images. I must have done with every amusement of such a kind that I could not appear before my God while in the act. The Christian is to remember, that “in such an hour as he thinks not the Son of Man comes.” Would he like his Master to come and find him in the society of the frivolous—engaged in the dizzy mazes of the dance? I think not. Perhaps one of the last places he would like to be found in would be there. Dancing! While Hell is filling and sinners are perishing!

What? Are Christian men to be the saviors of the world and yet waste their time so? Are there no poor to be relieved, no sick to be visited? Are there no dens of this great metropolis that need to be pried into by the servants of Christ? Are there no children to be taught, are there no aged men who need leading to Jesus? Is there nothing to be done in this great vineyard—this great field of the Lord, so that a Christian could afford to waste his time so? Let the worldling do it if he likes—we have no right to talk to him about it. But amusements that are right for him are not right for us. Let

him do as he pleases, but we are the servants of God. We protest that all we have and all we are is given up to Christ and can that be consistent with the waste of time that is involved in the frivolous amusements in which so many are content to indulge? I do not condemn the thing itself, any more than I condemn the grove of trees. I condemn it for its associations with many things that are to be avoided by the Christian—jesting, lascivious and foolish talking and many unholy thoughts, that must necessarily arise. Down with the trees altogether, because there have false gods been worshipped.

You are too hard—a great deal—some will reply. Well, I dare say I am, but I am not harder than God's Word. If I am, whatever is not according to God's Word, reject. But you will not find me beginning to temporize just yet, I assure you. While I know a thing to be true, I am not the man to stammer in speaking it. What I would not do myself I would not have others do who are Christian men and who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I must lift up the axe against another evil—books. There are many books that are to be so esteemed by the Christian man that they must be cut down like the groves of trees—not because they are bad in themselves, mark—but because there false gods are worshiped. Reading novels is the rage of the present day. I go to a railway bookstall and I cannot see a book that I can read. I get one and it is all trash. I search to find something that would be really valuable but I am told, "It would not sell here." The fact is, nothing will sell but that which is light and frothy and frivolous. So every traveler is compelled to consume such food as that, unless he carry something better with him. Do I, therefore, say, that the Christian man must condemn all reading of fiction and novels? No, I do not. But I do say that the mass of popular books published under the name of Light Literature is to be eschewed and cut down, for the simple reason that the moral of it is not that of piety and goodness. The tendency of the reading is not to bring the Christian towards Heaven, but rather to retard and impede him in his good course.

I lift up my axe against many a work that I cannot condemn. If I look at it abstractedly in itself, it must come down, because I remember how much of my own precious time I wasted in such vapid reading—how many years in which I might have had fellowship with Christ have been cast away, while I have been foolishly indulging a vicious taste for the romantic and the frivolous. No, there are many things which are not wrong in themselves, but which nevertheless must be given up by the true Christian because they have had and do have association with things positively wrong. Just as these groves must be cut down—not because there can be a sin in *trees*, but because the trees have been associated with the worship of idols.

You remember John Knox's memorable saying, when he turned the Romanists out, he went straight away to pull down their Chapels. He gathered the mob together and began to overhaul the whole of their places of worship. Why should John Knox meddle with them? "I'll pull the nests down," said he, "then I shall be sure that the birds will never come back." So I would today. I would not only drive away the birds—the sin, the evil—but I would pull down the nest, so that there will be no temptation to you to come back again to the sin. "Come you out from among them and be you separate and touch not the

unclean thing and I will be a Father unto you.” Come out from the world, you children of Christ. Have nothing to do with their enjoyments, nor with their devices. Follow the Lamb where ever He goes. Go not whoring after these iniquities, but drink waters out of your own cistern and be always ravished with His love who is your Lord, your Husband, your Hope, your Joy, your All.

III. Moreover, they not only broke the images and cut down the groves, but they **THREW DOWN THE HIGH PLACES, AND THE ALTERS OUT OF ALL JUDAH AND BENJAMIN.** This was, perhaps, the least necessary work, but it showed the thoroughness of their desire to serve the Lord. These altars were built for the service of the true God, but they were built against His express command. God had said that He would have but one altar, namely, at Jerusalem. These people, to avoid inconvenience and trouble, thought they would build altars wherever they lived and there celebrate their worship. I can conceive that they worshipped Jehovah with all their hearts and that He might graciously accept even such worship as that through Christ Jesus, overlooking their ignorance and casting their sin behind His backs. But now as their zeal was kindled, their consciences became scrupulous, so they resolved not only to avoid the things that are positively sinful but they would have nothing to do with anything that is not positively right. So they began to cast down the altars of God, because they were not built according to God’s Law.

This, then, is a third reformation, which ought to result from the ministry and the assembling of the people together when we have times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. There should be a casting down of everything in connection with the true worship, that is not according to the Law of God and the Word of God. As it was with the worship of Israel of old, so it is now with that of the Christian Church. The pure becomes alloyed with the base—that which is genuine with that which is spurious—Divine Revelation with human tradition and the inspired decrees of Heaven with the inventions and devices of the children of men. Some fallacies are perpetuated from generation to generation, until the deep hue of antiquity tinges them over, makes them look venerable and speciously invites a reverence and regard to which they never had any legitimate claim.

We have in this country, seven or eight different forms of the Christian religion. Some of these are at complete variance and contradiction with others. Some indeed, I verily think, are contradictory in themselves. We are all, I do trust, building on a sure foundation for eternity, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and abide by the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, notwithstanding our many grievous discrepancies, which must involve error. Evangelical Christians are to be found in every sect and denomination, bearing the name of our one common Lord. Yes, there are some who as yet have never taken upon them His name by public profession, who devoutly follow Him in secret. But, mark you this, if the Grace of God is once more restored to the Church in all its fullness and the Spirit of God is poured out from on high, in all His sanctifying energy there will come such a shaking as has never been seen in our days.

We want such an one as Martin Luther to rise from his tomb. If Martin Luther were now to visit our so-called reformed Churches, he would say with

all his holy boldness, "I was not half a reformer when I was alive before, now I will make thorough work of it." How he would adjure you to cast away your superstitions, to abolish all the rites and forms and ceremonies that are not of Divine appointment and once more in the integrity of simple faith, to worship the Lord God alone, in that way alone, which the Lord God Himself has ordained. Let all these, like those altars of Judaism, be cast down to the ground and utterly put away. I desire not only to be a Christian, but to be *fully* a Christian, walking in all the ways of my blessed Master with a perfect heart. And I desire for all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ here, not only that they may have grace enough to save their souls, but grace enough to purify them from all the devices of men, from every false doctrine, from every false practice and every evil thing.

Do you now speak of doctrine? Are there not two kinds of doctrines professed among Christians—the one Arminian and the other Calvinistic? We cannot be both right. It is impossible. The Arminian says, "God loves all men alike." "Not so," says the Calvinist. "He has proved to many of us by His free and distinguishing grace that He has given us more than others, not for the merit of our deserving, but according to the riches of His mercy and the counsel of His own will." The Arminian supposes, that Christ has bought all men with His blood and yet that multitudes of these redeemed ones perish. The Calvinist holds that none can perish for whom Jesus died—that His blood was never shed in vain and that of all those whom He has redeemed, none shall ever perish. The Arminian teaches that though a man should be regenerated and become a child of God today, he may tomorrow be cast out of the Covenant and be as much a child of the devil as if no spiritual change had been wrought in him. "Not so," says the Calvinist, "Salvation is of God alone and where once He begins He never leaves off, until He has finished the good work."

How obvious it is that we cannot both be right in matters about which we so widely differ. I exhort you, therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, after you have broken your images and cut down your groves, go a step further and break down the false altars. I can only say for myself, "If I am wrong, I desire to be set right," and for you I am solemnly concerned, "If you are wrong, may God help you to a right judgment and bring you to see the Truth of God, embrace it and earnestly and valiantly maintain it. I like you to be charitable to others. But do not be too charitable to yourselves. Let others follow out their own conscientious convictions, but remember, it is not your *conscience* that is to be your guide, but God's Word. And if your conscience is wrong, you are to bring it to God's Word that it may be reprov'd and "transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is for you to do *what* God tells you, *as* God tells you, *when* God tells you and *how* God tells you.

Pardon me for a moment if I should risk the displeasure of some I love by referring to an ordinance of the Church about which we are likely to disagree. The sacred rite of Baptism is administered in a great number of Churches to little infants upon the sponsorship of their guardians or friends, while many of us consider that Holy Scripture teaches that Believers only (without respect to their age at all) are the proper subjects of Baptism and that upon a personal profession of their faith in Christ. I see a man take up

an unconscious infant in his arms and he says he baptizes it. When I turn to my Bible, I can see nothing whatever of this sort there. It is true I find the Lord Jesus saying, "Suffer little children to come unto Me," but that affords no precedent for carrying a little child to the minister, that could not come, that was too young to walk, much less to think and understand the meaning of these things. Yet more, when Jesus said "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven"—they did come to Him.

But I do not find that He baptized or sprinkled them at all, He gave them His blessing and they went away. I am sure He did not baptize them, for it is expressly said, "Jesus Christ baptized not, but His disciples." So, then, that passage does not favor the Paedo-Baptist, it is quite clear. I am informed however, that the reason why children are baptized is that we are told in the Bible that Abraham's children were circumcised. This puzzles me. I cannot see any likeness at all between the two things. But who were the persons circumcised? They were Israelites. Why were they circumcised? Because they were Israelites. That is the reason. And I say I would not hesitate to baptize any Christian, though he is a babe in Christ, as soon as he knows the Lord Jesus Christ. Were he only eight days old in the faith, if he proves that he is an Israelite in the spirit himself, I will baptize him. I have nothing to do with his father or his mother in religion. Religion is a personal act all the way through. Another man cannot believe for me, cannot repent for me. And another person cannot give for me the answer of a good conscience toward God in Baptism and have it done in my name. We must act on our own individual responsibility in religion by the Grace of God, or else the thing is virtually not done at all.

Now I believe many godly people do sincerely worship God at this altar of infant Baptism. But I am equally clear that it is my duty to do my utmost to break it down, for it is not God's altar. God's altar is Believers' Baptism. What said Philip to the Eunuch? "If you believe with all your heart, you may." "Lo, here is water," said the Eunuch. Yes, but that was not all. There must be faith, as well as water, before there could be legitimate Baptism. And every Baptism that is administered to any man, except he asks it himself on profession of his faith in Christ, is an altar at which I could not worship, for I do not believe it to be the altar of God, but an altar originally built at Rome, the pattern of which has been adopted here, to the marring of the union of the Church and to the great injury of souls.

Now, all I ask from those who differ from me in opinion is simply to look at the matter honestly and calmly. If they can find infant Baptism in the Bible, then let them practice it and worship there. If they cannot, let them be honest and come and worship at the altar of Jerusalem and there, alone. An old woman was once promised a Bible if she could find a text that sanctioned infant Baptism. She could only find one and that was, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." The minister gave her the Bible for her ingenuity, admitting that it was an ordinance of *man* and no mistake.

I quote this instance of infant Baptism as only one out of many corruptions that have crept into our Churches. It is quite clear that all sects cannot be right. They may be right as to the main points essential to salvation,

though in their discrepancies with one another they betray errors. I do not want you to believe that I am right. Rather turn to Scripture and see what is right. The day must come when Episcopacy, Independency, Wesleyans and every other system must be read by the Word of God and every form given up that is not approved before the Most High. I hope I shall always be able to lift up my voice against that charity growing up in our midst, which is not only a charity towards persons, but a charity towards doctrines. I have fervent charity towards every Brother in Christ who differs from me. I love him for Christ's sake and hold fellowship with him for the Truth's sake—but I can have no charity for his errors, nor do I wish him to have any for mine. I tell him straight to his face, "If your sentiments contradict mine, either I am right and you are wrong, or you are right and I am wrong. And it is time we should meet together and search the Word of God, to see what is right."

Talk of your Evangelical Alliances and such like—they will never endure. They may effect many blessed purposes, but they are not the remedy that is wanted for our divisions. What is wanted is for all of us to come to the model of the Word of God and when we have come to that, we must come together. Let us all come "to the law and to the testimony." Let the Baptist, let the Independent, let the Churchman lay aside his old thoughts, his old prejudices and his old traditions and let each man search for himself, as in the sight of Almighty God and some of the altars must go down, for they cannot all be after the Divine type, when their dissimilarity is so palpable.

May the Spirit of God be poured out in this land and there will come a three-fold reformation, such as I have described—broken images, groves cut down and fallen altars scattered to the winds. And yet, my dear Hearers, I do not ask you to attend to this last thing first. It is unimportant, compared with the first. The images are first to be burned, then sinful customs are to be given up and after that let the Church be reformed. Each of these in its proper place and due order is important and all must be attended to.

Yet once more, my Hearer, before I send you away, let me put one pertinent and pressing question to you. What have you got by all your hearing of God's Word? Some of you have heard sermons beyond count. You can hardly reckon the number of Gospel ministers to whom you have listened. What good have you obtained as the result of them all? Have you been led to repentance? Have you been brought to faith? Are you made "a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven"? If not, I solemnly remind you that all your Church goings and Chapel goings are increasing your condemnation. Unless you repent, these privileges shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you.

Woe unto you, London, woe unto you, for if the words which have been preached in your streets had been proclaimed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they had repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Woe unto you, you sons and daughters of pious parents, children trained in the Sunday-School, hearers of God's Word! For "except you repent, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you." I speak as unto wise men. Judge what I say, and may God guide you aright.

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LIFE IN EARNEST

NO. 433

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He did it with all his heart and prospered.”
2 Chronicles 31:21.***

This is no unusual occurrence. In fact, it seems to be the general rule of the moral universe that those men prosper who do their work with all their hearts, while those are almost certain to fail who go to their labor leaving half their hearts behind them. Look around you in business. Who are the young men who rise in the establishment? Not your men who sleep behind the counter, who are glad to avoid a customer. Employers soon discover those who throw energy into their work and they like a young man who has “push” in him.

He is sure to be promoted and in time will become a trader on his own account. Who are the merchants that succeed in this busy time of competition? Your lazy sluggards? No. Your men who are diligent in business, do what they do with both their hands, breast the current with all their strength, scorning to be carried down the stream to the cataract of bankruptcy. Who are your men who rise to eminence? Men do not go to bed and wake up in the morning to find themselves famous, at least not until they have encountered many stern labors.

God does not at this day give harvests to idle men except harvests of thistles, nor is He pleased to send wealth to the man who will not dig in the field to find its hidden treasure. It is universally confessed that if a man would prosper, he must be diligent in business. For at this day, beyond every preceding age it is true, “In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.”

The same thing is true if we leave mercantile pursuits and survey any other of the walks of life. If a man would make discoveries in science, he does not hit upon them by accident. But, being in the way, science meets with him. If a man would become eminent as a physician, he must walk the hospitals. If he would attain position at the bar, he must give days and nights to the folios of law. There is no hope for a man in these times, in anything, unless he proceeds to it with all his heart.

It is the same in religion as it is in other things. I would not have you treat religion as though it were a business. But I would have you put as much force and power and energy and heartiness and earnestness into religion as ever you do into business, and, I might add, that it deserves far more. How is it that false religions have spread? What made Mohammedanism once so mighty in the earth? It was because Mahomet himself, when he preached, was as sincerely deluded as any of his followers—when he was pelted in the streets he still persevered and when assassins dogged his footsteps he counted not his life dear unto him that he might proclaim what *he* thought to be a revelation from Heaven.

As for his followers, they were not sleepy professors. They drew their scimitars from their scabbards and swore that they would not rest till they

had brought men by edge of steel to the faith of their prophet. On they dashed, till their religion, like a mighty rising ocean, swept all before it, nor could its rising wave be driven back till it was met by an equal enthusiasm to withstand its progress.

Look again on Roman Catholic missions. How was it that Romanists did what we have never done and what I fear we never shall do till we have changed our men? How was it that Francis Xavier carried his faith into India, preached in Burma, obtained great influence in China and even entered into the recesses of Japan, till everywhere you might see a Catholic convent or nunnery and a crucifix lifted up, with devotees bowing before it? Because Xavier's spirit was full of fire. He seemed to be a flash of lightning flaming from one end of Heaven to the other.

Now mark, as it has been with false religions, so must it be with the true. Under God, the Holy Spirit, our only hope for the increase of the Church and for the conversion of the world lies in the development of energy within us, in the bringing out of earnestness in Christian souls. Oh, it was not scholarship that converted the heathen world at first, for on the slabs in the catacombs we have decisive evidence that the first Christians could scarcely spell their own names. It was not the pomp of learning, the pride of philosophy, or the power of eloquence which made the early confessors so mighty. It was their singular earnestness.

The Church was all on fire. She was like a volcano. She might not be high and lofty as some of the surrounding hills, but they had summits clothed with frost, while she sent forth earnest Truths of God like streams of lava, which burned their way and covered all the lands. Christians in those days were Christians, indeed. They believed what they professed. They knew what they spoke. They testified what they had seen. And they spoke with an unconquerable, untamable energy, which smote even the iron power of Rome and dashed it into shivers.

So must it be today, and indeed, so is it. Look around you—who are the most useful men in the Christian Church today? The men who do what they undertake for God with all their hearts. Where is the preacher whom God blesses to the conversion of hundreds in a year? Is he a sleepy, prosaic soul? Does he confine himself within narrow limits? Does he speak sleepy words to a slumbering congregation? We know it is not so, but where God is pleased to give the congregation, it is, whatever it may not be, a proof that there has been earnestness in the preacher.

Who are the most successful Sunday school teachers? The most learned? Every superintendent will tell you it is not so. The most talented? The most wealthy? No. They that are the most *zealous*. The men whose hearts are on fire—those are the men who honor Christ. Who among you today is doing the most for your Master's kingdom? I will tell you. Lend me a spiritual thermometer by which I may try the heat of your heart and I will tell you the amount of your success. If your hearts are cold towards God I am sure you are doing nothing though you may pretend to do it. But if you can say, "Lord, our soul is all on flame with an agony of desire to do good to the souls of men," then you are doing good, and God is blessing you as He did Hezekiah, who did it with all his heart and prospered.

I feel that very many Christians are not Christians with all their hearts. I feel that perhaps some of you have only given Jesus Christ a dull, cob-

webby corner of your hearts, instead of bidding Him sit at the head of the table and reign upon the throne. And fearing that we are all in danger of getting into a Laodicean lukewarm state, I wish to stir you up this morning. But if I may only stir *myself* up, I shall be thrice happy to go home and think that at least *one* has gotten some good from the service, for the preacher needs to be kept alive quite as much as the hearers. There is a danger that even the Lord's servant may lack the live coal upon his lips, and then he will be useless to his hearers.

This morning we shall notice *the effects of whole-heartedness upon the Christian*. I shall then *endeavor to stir you up with many arguments to be earnest in your work of faith and labor of love*. And when I have so done, I shall address those to whom religion has as yet been a trifling matter. And God grant that they may be ready to seek the Lord with all their hearts, for then He will surely be found of them.

I. First, then, let us notice THE SPHERE WHICH CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS OCCUPIES IN THE DIVINE LIFE. Mark, I speak now only to those who are really and savingly converted to God, for if we are not first right with God, zeal for God is but a pretense.

One of the first things that thorough earnestness will do for a Christian man is to make him *think* very earnestly for his Lord and Master. In the diary of Jonathan Edwards we find the following account of his feelings towards the Lord's work, "I had great longing for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world; my secret prayer used to be in great part taken up in praying for it. If I heard the least hint of anything that had happened in any part of the world which appeared to me, in some respect or other, to have favorable aspect on the interest of Christ's kingdom, my soul eagerly caught at it and it would much animate and refresh me. I used to be earnest to read public news letters, mainly for that end, to see if I could not find some news favorable to the interest of religion in the world."

Now, when we are full of zeal for God, it is the same with us. Our thoughts are continually set upon Divine things. Go where we may, we regard our place not as a sphere for business, but as a sphere for usefulness. We make that our very first thought. Why, Beloved, if we are really in earnest for God, we shall begin to think of Christ's work in the world as soon as ever we wake. And when we rest at night it will be still with the Lord before us, and with His glory written in our hearts.

I am afraid some of you think but very little of Him and of His cause in the world. How often when our missionary heralds are issued, nobody cares to read them. The annual report of what God is doing in foreign nations is generally the driest and dullest affair that ever comes in our way—not so much dry in itself but because we of this generation have not been tutored and schooled to think of the advance of the Gospel and the progress of Christ's cause. Let once this flaming torch of zeal kindle your souls and you will have Christ's cause upon your hearts at all times.

But when a man has thus had his soul quickened, to consider the cause of Christ, the next thing he will do is to *plan* and to *purpose* for it. What fine purposes some men have at eccentric seasons! After they have listened to some earnest address they go home thinking—"Well, I must do something." And they half resolve they will, but, lacking the whole-heartedness of Hezekiah, the purpose never comes to a definite shape. It

still resides in the clouds. As some men build castles in the air, so others build Churches there. They educate preachers in the air, they support Christ's ministers in the sky, they send out fresh missionaries in the clouds.

All their plans are very beautiful, and all practical schemes are poor affairs compared with their magnificent projects, but then it is all an unsubstantial dream—a pleasing picture, a dissolving view, and it soon melts into something which for them is more practical—the world and the affairs thereof. Give a man earnestness, and every time he makes a purpose it is a purpose. Every stroke of the great motive-power within his soul reveals and sets a wheel in motion. He cannot let the blood circulate through him without its carrying life in every drop. But some men have dead blood in their veins, it is going round, going to the heart, and issuing from it, but there is no life in a drop of it.

They can talk and they can sometimes make a resolve but it never comes to a definite purpose. They never set their ties and plant their feet down and say, "God helping me, I will do something. God being with me, I will not live in this world for nothing. I will not be as an oyster which lies in the mud and opens its shell according as the tide brings round the meal-time. It shall not be said that I live merely to eat and drink, and to accumulate wealth. But, O Christ Jesus! By everything that is true, if You will help me I will serve You while I live and, if it must be, will be prepared to die for Your cause." Only earnest men get so far as to select their purpose and adhere to it.

Dear Friends, choose your gun, but mind you, stand to it till every round of ammunition is exhausted. We have known persons in a great spasm—in a sort of apoplectic fit of pious enthusiasm, make a huge resolve but they came to their cooler senses long before it is carried out. The blood has run to the land very powerfully, there has even been too much blood—they have rolled over in the spasm of fanaticism. It has never come to a practical effect.

Now, when a man's heart is right with God, what he has resolved to do he will do. I can speak for one, when I say I know a man who, when he feels that God has given him a work to do—when he has once resolved it shall be done—would move Heaven and earth but what he would accomplish it. And he would sooner break his heart or destroy his health than he would fail in it. For he feels that if it is God's work, it must be done. Man's work may stop, but God's work cannot. And when any get in his way, or seem to thwart his purpose, that man feels his zeal so boiling over, that for God's sake he forgets everything else. And even dear friendships snap when it appears as if Christ's cause were imperiled.

I know this, that when a man gets thoroughly alive for God, he cannot put up with those lazy sluggards who will neither work themselves nor permit others to labor. When once a Believer gets his spirit wholly up to the work, it is now—for God and Christ—follow who may. But as for you that are faint-hearted, go to your homes lest you make the man of God's heart to faint. Stand away, lest the chilling influence of your icy souls should do something to abate our fervor. Methinks a Christian is never worth much till, having been brought up to the point of resolve, he will achieve the Heaven-born purpose, come what may. Until he is ready to

crash and smash everything earthly and worldly so that he may accomplish his life-work in the name of the eternal God who called him to it.

His earnestness of purpose will show itself in *perseverance*. The man fell the first time—"Never mind," says he, "It is God's work. We will try again." He breaks down again—but he falls to rise. There he sees the summit of the mountain glittering in the sunlight. And though he has a burden on his back, he vows, "I will climb there." He has fallen down that crag and he lies there black with bruises, groaning and moaning. The first thing he does when he wipes his eyes of the dust, is to look up and say, "I will mount there yet." He climbs again—but an antagonist shoves him down. He has not time to stop and examine who it is, and resent the insult—he recommences the ascent.

Now and then he runs. When he cannot run he walks. And when he cannot walk he creeps. And when it seems impossible to go on hands and knees, he is content to pull himself up by his hands alone, oftentimes even grasping a briar and sending a thorn into his flesh, but still saying, "It is God's place and He has bid me climb and in His Divine strength I will do it. I cannot rest, I cannot be quiet till the deed is done." Perseverance is the sure effect of this whole-heartedness for God. Mark carefully that this heart being thus on fire will show its zeal in an entire dependence upon God and in intensely fervent prayer for God's help and for God's blessing.

Surely a man cannot know himself, who, when he has a high and noble purpose, attempts it apart from God. He is well persuaded that if it is God's work it must be done in God's strength and as he must have that strength, he goes before God as if he meant to have it, and could take no denial. One of the old Puritans says, "When we pray to God without fervency we do, as it were, ask Him to deny us. But when we can go with fervency, then we must prevail." Oh, those prayers which one has sometimes heard when the man of God seemed like a Samson! He gets hold of the two pillars of Heaven and bowing himself with all his strength to pull down the mercy and to destroy his sins, he knocks at Heaven's gate as for dear life—the knock of a starving beggar who cannot afford to be unheard.

Oh, that is prevailing prayer, when we can get a grip of the angel and wrestle with him. I saw in one of the Churches in Paris a picture by an eminent artist representing Jacob wrestling with the angel. I had not exactly conceived it so literally as the artist had, for he has sketched the Patriarch with his foot between the angel's feet, trying to throw him down and wrestling just as wrestlers might do in the ring. There ought to be a practical purpose about our prayer and as intense an earnestness to win the blessing from the angel as there is on the part of the wrestler to hurl his foe upon his back. We shall never get true and lasting revival in the Church till we have men who in the supplications do their work with all their hearts and thus prosper.

My dear Friends, I shall not enlarge further to show you the proper sphere of earnestness—the fact is that it enters into every part of the spiritual man. Earnestness quickens his pulse, increases the circulation of his blood, it makes the man in all respects in an healthy state. These holy stimulants make the soul stronger than the giant when he is refreshed with new wine. If you would ask me what fire has to do with the Christian sacrifice, I would answer it has everything to do with it. You

may present a sacrifice in the dark but you cannot consume a sacrifice without flame. You may do with very little light, but you must have fire to burn the whole victim, or else the sacrifice is no offering at all.

Oh for more of this fire! Jesus! Master! Baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire! Fill our souls with fervor! Restore unto us the indomitable energy of our ancestors. Give us back the northern iron and steel, to which their resolute natures may be likened—deliver us from these willow days in which men bend before every blast—make us strong men to run the race of righteousness, and mighty men made mighty through Your Spirit, with earnestness to serve You among the sons of men!

II. I shall want your earnest attention while I labor TO STIR YOU UP BY CERTAIN ARGUMENTS WHICH MAY PROVOKE YOU TO THIS EARNESTNESS.

Either our religion is the grossest impostor that was ever palmed upon mankind, or else it is one which deserves the whole life and force and strength of every man who has been blessed by it. I would today, if I were not sure that God's Word is true and that the precious Doctrines of Grace are the very revelation of Heaven, renounce them boldly. Oh, I could not, I hope—I speak before God—hold the religion of Christ and yet be sleepy about it. It does seem to me that if religion is worth anything, it is worth everything—and that for man to keep his godliness as some great farmers do their little off-hand farms, which they merely farm for pleasure, while their very life and substance is spent in another place, seems to me to be the height of wickedness and the topmost ridge of absurdity.

Either I would never seek God and His righteousness at all, or I would seek them *first*. It seems to me to be an insane attack upon everything like wisdom, to put the worst things first and the best things last—to put the world on our heads and Heaven under our feet—to make Christ second best and to make

Mammon chief and lord in our affections. Surely this will never do.

But, Christian Brothers and Sisters, that I may have your hearts warmed this morning, may the Spirit of God take these things and lay them like hot coals to your souls. Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, what solemn things you and I have to deal with. We have to deal with the souls of men, immortal, infinitely precious. We have to clear under God with the eternal interests of Heaven and Hell. We have dealings with the sinner's sin and long to see it washed away with the precious blood of Christ. We have dealings with man's natural death in sin and long that men may be regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Now, if the soul is what Scripture tells us it is—if there is a Heaven and a Hell—if Christ has made an atonement for sin, these are things that cannot be trifled with. As well dance upon the altar of God, or dabble a harlot's garments in the blood of the Paschal Lamb, as trifle and be half-hearted when we have to deal with such awful things as these.

Consider *the greatness of the work we have to deal with*. Have any of you a glimpse of an idea of this one city of London? Three million! Three million! As many as the Scottish nation, with some sixty thousand added to the number every year—more added than we add accommodation in places of worship to receive them, so that if our Churches grow—still not in the same ratio as the population. It is said that we have more than half a million inhabitants in this city who are heathens—as positively hea-

thens as though they lived under the sway of the king of Dahomey, or dwelt in the very center of Tartary—without God and without Christ! They never listen to the Gospel, never enter a place of worship from the beginning of the year to the end of it. This is the work for which we must gird up our loins.

Oh, dear Brethren! We cannot afford to be half-hearted here. If there is some happy city somewhere in the world where all men hear the Word and where the most are converted, even there coldness is inexcusable. But here, here in this awful city with so much to do, asleep!! Oh, God, forgive us that we are not more awake! Think how few there are to do the work. There are, perhaps, many so called laborers, men who wear the robes of priesthood but who know not Christ in the power of His Gospel. How few there are of the faithful among men who are ready to spend and be spent!

When I look at the great harvest—enlarge your thoughts for a moment, the field is the world—when I see corn field after corn field, a thousand million immortal souls. And in some countries one missionary to two million, and in others, not one even to ten million immortal souls—one may wipe the sweat from his brow in the hot and sultry day but only the cold-hearted will stop to rest, for there is so much to do. “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.” And shall those laborers sleep? O Lord, we beseech You, have pity upon us and help us never to sleep again but to be in earnest for poor souls.

Think, I pray you, how earnest Satan is. If *we* slumber, *he* never does. If we are idle, certainly he never is. As Hugh Latimer said, the devil is the most busy prelate in the land. He traverses his diocese. He is always visiting his flock. He is instant in season and out of season to destroy. See the activity of the infidel and the Romanist—those who hold false doctrines—how zealously do they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. What are we doing? I say, Brethren, what are we doing? Call it nothing and you have not called it by too small a name. They are alive and we are half dead. They are boiling in fervent heat and we are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm.

And, oh, I pray you, my Hearers, think and let this move you—think of the responsibilities which lie upon us as a Church. I speak not egotistically, to glorify either myself personally or myself in you. But there has never been a congregation—certainly never a dissenting congregation—which has been more favored than we have been. What has God worked! What a dew from Heaven has rested upon the Word! What multitudes have been added to the Church! What manner of people are we to be? Indeed, Brethren, I do not need to censure, for your obligations are felt and the Holy Spirit is helping you to fulfill them.

There are men in the midst of this Church of whom I dare speak in any and in every company, and say that Apostolic days scarcely produced men superior to them. I have the felicity and the honor to see some in this Church who are patterns of everything that is good. They not only spend their time for Christ, but who beyond what I ever expected to see of mortal men. They give labor, substance and talent to Christ and His cause. Those I always look upon with joy as being the honorable product of the Truth of God fully, fairly and faithfully preached.

But there are many others of whom this could not be said. Oh, we were speaking lies in hypocrisy if we said of all of you that you were doing what you could do, or half what you can do! Yes, and in some cases a hundredth part of what you will wish you had done when you come to lie upon your beds. God has been pleased to give a congregation and to give to that congregation a ministry upon which the Spirit has rested, as is manifested in the many—the *very many* conversions which *daily* take place in our midst.

The Christian world has looked upon us and said, “How God has favored that Church!” And if *we* sleep, what base ungrateful wretches shall we be? If God has brought us to the kingdom for such a time as this, and we prove unworthy, deliverance will come from some other quarter to this land but we shall have to write Ichabod upon these walls, for the glory will depart. God will leave us to our own devices. We have had opportunities of doing good that have been seldom offered to any body of Christians, and if we do not avail ourselves of them, the most withering curse that ever came upon a Christian community must most certainly fall upon us. Oh, may God help us to be found faithful to our charge.

Do you need anything else to stir you up? Behold, before you today the stream of death washing away myriads of souls—behold, I say, before you this morning, the dying souls of men. Listen! Their moans are going up to Heaven now, the groans which they utter in their last agonies are accusing you before the Most High. “None cared for my soul,” is the cry of many. “Great God, I lived in a Christian land but none cared for my soul! I lived in a court or in an alley and Christian people passed the entrance of that alley to go to Chapel but they never thought about me. I lived next door to a Christian man but he never prayed for me. I lived in a top room of the very house where there lived a man of God but he never thought of me!”

Oh, hear those last cries, I say, as the Spirit for the last time reflects upon the cold Church which cared not for her children. Hear the accusation of the angel as he cries, “The sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones—the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst—the young children ask for bread and no man breaks it unto them.”

Hear, I beseech you and let it startle you into earnestness—hear the shrieks of the damned spirits for a moment. Another soul has gone to Hell, and while we speak, another and another and another. Listen to the solemn fall, the moving of the black waters as they close around the sinking spirit. As roll the masses of water down Niagara’s steep, so roll the waves of souls into perdition. And you, you are the men whom God has sent to be the saviors of the world—will you waste the moments and neglect your charge?

Black night has settled upon the nations and you, you only, are the men who carry the flaming torch into the thick darkness—followers of Christ, disciples of Jesus. You are to be the deliverers of those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death bound in affliction and iron. Will you sit still, will you fold your arms, will you give to the world and self that which belongs to Christ? Let my tears influence you. But what are these if shrieks of doomed souls cannot awaken us? What hearts of adamant we

must have, not to feel while the terrors of Hell are around us! What granite heart must we have received if we believe that men are being lost and yet never care for them!

Oh, sits there a Christian man anywhere around me, above, or beneath, who cares not for man's soul? I pray God to send into his ears one piercing shriek from Tophet and let that abide in his memory and ring in his soul until he says, "I *must* do something to win sinners to Christ."

But once more—and if I fail here—I break down altogether. I conjure myself and you to serve God with all our hearts, because of that love which we have received of Jesus. Look, there He hangs—my eyes behold Him. His head is crowned with thorns. His feet are pierced with nails. His hands are dripping with blood. Jesus, Master! You are dying for me! That precious heart's blood of Yours is flowing for my redemption and for my cleansing. At Your feet I fall and kiss You. O Lover of my soul, I cannot but love You, You have won my heart. The love of Christ constrains me! And do You, Lord, for sinners, bleed? For rebels, for enemies, for those who would not have You to reign over them and shall I not adore You?

Yes, but when I rise from my knees, shall I go forth into the world and forget You? Thorn-crowned head, shall I forget You? Pierced hands and feet, shall I forget You? Mangled body, shall I forget You? Slaughtered Emmanuel, shall I forget You? God forbid!—

***"Sooner than not my Savior love
Oh, may I cease to be."***

Beloved, what do you say? Will you look into His face and never weep for souls? Will you look upon His wounds and your heart never be wounded for poor dying men? Will you live unto yourselves and die unto yourselves?

Sirs, the infidel is not far wrong when he tells us that our religion is hypocrisy, if we can be half-hearted over it. Go, go you enemy of the Church, tell it in Gath. Publish it in the streets of Ascalon, till we become a hissing and a reproach if you shall find us living, as though the Truth of God were a lie and as though the doctrines revealed of God were but a delusion and an impostor! Wake up, Church of God! Why are you given to slumber? O for a voice like thunder! How would I make you wake! But what am I, more than half asleep myself? I read the life of such men as Alleine of Taunton, and Baxter of Kidderminster, Grimshaw of Haworth and Whitfield of everywhere—I blush at my cold heart.

Especially when perusing the life of our Apostle Paul, I blush a thousand times to think how idly I have lived. Sinners, these were men—the tears streamed down their cheeks when they thought of sinners lost forever. Their words froze not like icicles upon their lips—they spoke and every word was power. Oh how they pleaded! How Paul could say, "Night and day with tears," (hear how he puts it), "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." *He* surely could not accuse himself that he had not poured out his soul for men. No, these men *lived*.

We dare not say we live. Oh, the long-suffering and the tender mercy of God, that He has had compassion on such a Church as that of the present day and that He continues to have mercy upon us, when we are so dull and sluggish in the service of Christ. Even while I am preaching thus I feel sorry that we should have need of such a sermon. When the

Spartans went to battle, every Spartan marched with songs, willing to fight. But when the Persians went to the conflict, you could hear as the regiments came on the crack of whips, as the officers drove their soldiers to the fight. You need not wonder that a few Spartans were more than a match for thousands of Persians—that in fact, they were like lions in the midst of sheep.

So let it be with the Church, never needing to be flogged to action but full of an irrepressible life which longs for conflict against everything which is contrary to God. Then we should be like lions in the midst of herds of our enemies and nothing, through God, should be able to stand against us. Play no longer, men! Cease your piping and dancing in the market places. Come, lift up your hands from those childish toys! Come away men, come away from the dormitories where you sleep so luxuriously and from the playgrounds where you sport so merrily!

Get to something that is worth doing, to something that is high and noble and heavenly, befitting your birth. “What is this you are calling play?” you say. Why your work, your business, your cares, unless they are sanctified to God. I tell you, Sirs, that in the light of eternity all thing else save serving God are mere child’s-play, mere theatricals, mere masquerading. They are but the mummeries of a carnival, the jests of a comedy, the laughter of a pantomime. It is only serving God that is doing immortal work. It is only living for Christ that is living at all.

III. And now I must draw to a conclusion—may God give me fresh Grace while I undertake the solemn work OF DEALING WITH CARELESS AND UNCONVERTED SOULS.

When Mr. Whitfield was preaching in the parish Church of Haworth, he said when he came to the point of self-examination, “I was about to address the ungodly but I suppose that after the faithful ministry to which you have listened in this Church, there is very little need for me to say anything about this.” Mr. Grimshaw thereupon rose and said, “Brother Whitfield, don’t flatter them, I fear that half of them are going to Hell with their eyes open.”

And I must say this morning, blessing God for all the conversions that have taken place here, yet for God’s sake we dare not flatter you. There are many of you still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, as far from God as ever you were. Though we have wept over you and preached to you again and again, yet your hard hearts will not break. Up to now you have been proof that *we* can do nothing, and unless the Spirit of God shall come upon you, we fear that you will remain the same. But now in God’s name let us talk to you.

And so, my Hearers, you think that the things of God are not worth serious thought, at least not yet. If they are not altogether trifling things, they are of such secondary importance that any time will do. The scraggy end of your life will suffice, you think, for them. Now let me remind you who may be sporting with these things, that this is inconsistent with reason and sense. You will find dying to be very earnest work. It will be no amusement to be smitten by the hand of death, to go to your deathbed with your physician’s voice in your ear, “Nothing can be done for you, you may linger for a little while but you must die.”

When the death struggle comes on, when death gets you, when the grim monster shakes you till you feel every bone rattle, when they wipe

the death sweat of the last conflict from your brow, when the darkness steals over your eyes, when your extremities chill with death, when the voice is choked, when the death rattle is in your throat, oh, Sirs, you will not laugh, then! You will not say these things are fancies! You will have no hard words in those last moments against those who warned you.

Men laughed at Noah when he built his ark upon dry land, but when they were climbing to the mountain tops to escape the inundating waves, they had no material for jest and satire. Then their tears and cries and groans proved that they felt the truth of Noah's preaching of righteousness. It will be so with you—mark, whosoever shall be the witness of it—you will find death no child's play. And then comes the judgment. The heavens are on fire, the earth is shaking. The Judge is sitting and the books are opened. Will you laugh then, when you hear your name proclaimed with the addition "Come to judgment, come away?"

When the eye of the Judge shall be fixed upon you and He shall turn to that page which records your deeds, and shall solemnly read them while men and angels hear—Sinner! Sinner! It is enough to drive the laughter out of you this morning if you would but hear even the distant echo of the awful voice which shall pronounce the sentence, "Depart you cursed into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels."

After the judgment, what comes then, Sinner? Then comes wrath without end. God will deal with you. His bare arm shall smite you. Beware, lest He tear you to pieces and there be none to deliver you. In eternity, mercy's gates are shut—God's long-suffering is then over. Justice commences its awful work. Soul, you will have no merry jests in Hell. You will find no laughter there at God's mysteries. Oh, you may go on trifling now, my Hearers, but *then* you will not. You may say a little more sleep and a little more slumber today—but there will be none of it then.

Oh, how you will look back upon the misspent past and wish, but wish in vain, that you had never been created, sooner than that you should have lived to lose your only hope of salvation, your only time in which you might find salvation. O God, my God, I beseech You plead with men, for we are weak! Plead with them, and make them feel that death, nor judgment, nor Hell are things to be trifled with!

Will you remember, you who are the butterflies of the day, the insects who flit from flower to flower? Remember that Christ did not trifle when He came into the world to save souls. His was no life spent in the polished refinements of gaiety. His was a stern, awful life—His was a zeal that ate Him up. When He sweat great drops of blood, it was no light burden He had to carry upon those blessed shoulders. And when He poured out His heart, it was no weak effort He was making for the salvation of His people.

Ah, Sinner! Ah, Sinner! Was Christ in earnest and are *you* foolish? Was Christ in earnest, I say, and do *you* despise, do you forget, do *you* neglect this great salvation? I may add, the ministers whom God sends are in earnest. I can say at this moment, I do feel a longing for the conversion of my hearers, such as I cannot describe. I would count it a high privilege if I might sleep in death this morning, if that death could redeem your souls from Hell. But why is it that we can feel? Oh, that we felt more! Why is it that we can weep when you do not? What is your soul to us, compared with what it must be to you? If we warn you, and you perish, your blood

will not be required at our hand. It is only if we are cold and indifferent that we shall be held responsible.

But when we have poured out our heart unto you, when we have stretched out our arms and like a loving mother with a child, have sought to bring you to the arms of Jesus, we have done all that we can do. We must leave the rest with God. But how is it, why is it, that *you* can trifle? It is your *own* salvation, not mine. It is your own eternal state. It is *you* that will lie forever in the pit, or joyously climb to Heaven. It is you, Sinner, yourself! Not your neighbor, not the person that is sitting next to you, but *you*, standing there in the crowd, or you yonder—each of you personally. Oh, why should *we* be earnest and *you* be dull? God forgive you this sin and forbid you to trifle longer.

But lastly, you will find God to be in earnest when He comes to punish you. When He lets loose His terrors on you, you shall find it no sport. When the arrow which is today fitted to the string shall fly, you shall find it to be no babe's toy. When the sword which has been long in furbishing and which is bathed in Heaven, shall begin to cut, you may say to it, "Oh, Sword, when will you rest, when will you be quiet." But it will know no rest, for it will be awfully and solemnly in earnest with you, punishing you for your sins.

Would now that one could awake you! Would that every heart here felt the need of whole-heartedness towards God. But you will not mind it—you will go away and I shall be unto you as one that plays a tune upon a goodly instrument, and it will all be forgotten. There was a tear just now—perhaps rather a tear of sympathy excited by earnestness, than a tear from your own hearts, for your own case. You will go away and forget it all, and you will come again and forget it again. And we shall go on praying with you, and preaching to you, but you will forget it. And one day it will be said, "So-and-So is dead, he died without a hope." And though it will be some consolation, yet what a sad one for the minister to be able to say, "Well, as in the sight of God, I did all I could, I did warn, teach, exhort, and plead with him."

Oh, how much better if God shall bless the Word to you, and we shall hear you tell that He took you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock and established your goings. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Faith in Christ is the great way of salvation. Trust Jesus, trust Him with all your heart and you are saved this morning and your sins are gone!

And when you are saved yourself, I pray you forget not what I have tried to instill this morning—that if we serve God with all our hearts we shall prosper in His ways. And that we cannot expect to see His blessing upon anything that we do, unless we do it as unto the Lord and not unto men.

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WORDS TO REST ON NO. 2250

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*“And the people rested themselves upon the
words of Hezekiah, king of Judah.”
2 Chronicles 32:8.*

IT is very beautiful reading, the story of Hezekiah, to see how the people always went with him. God had prepared the nation for a change and when the hour came, the man came with it. Under his father Ahaz, the people had been idolaters and had forsaken God. But, when Hezekiah became king, he had a zeal for the worship of Jehovah, and on the very threshold of his reign he began what proved to be a glorious reformation in the land. He seems to have been a man who was attractive to the people and they took up his line of things at once with enthusiasm. Whether he proposed to break down the idols, to cleanse the Temple, or to bring tithes into the House of God, they made no objections, but, on the contrary, they followed his word with much vigor and earnestness. It is a grand thing when God sends a man who can guide others aright—especially when, in times of apostasy and spiritual declension, a leader is given who becomes a guide back to the old paths. We should feel exceedingly grateful whenever, in any place, God raises up a judge to deliver Israel and when the people serve God all the days of that judge.

When our text comes in, the people of Judah were in great straits. The Assyrians, who were both cruel and barbarous in their treatment of others, had invaded the land and had captured all the country, with the exception of Jerusalem. The city of the Great King was yet untrod by the armies of the alien, but it looked as if it could not hold out very long, and Hezekiah encouraged his men of war by exciting their faith in their God. “Be strong and courageous,” he said to them. “Be not afraid nor dismayed for the King of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him.” With a ring of triumph in his tone, he told them that with Sennacherib was only an army of flesh and though it was a powerful one, yet with *them* was the Omnipotence of God and, therefore, there was more with them than with the Assyrians! The past glory of his reign and the evident depth of his own faith added weight to his words—and the people believed his testimony. In such a time of great difficulty, when people are apt to mutiny, to find fault with their leaders and to break up into cliques and parties, they still held

to their king and comforted themselves with the assurance he had given them of help in God. They were not distressed because of invasion, nor did they despair of their cause. They were, of course, conscious of their great danger, but they had found peace, even in their extremity, by quoting to themselves and to one another, the emboldened language of their king. "The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, the king of Judah."

It is not always a good thing to rest upon man's words. It may often be a very evil thing and because some error has been introduced by "such a dear, good man," it has had the deadlier hold upon masses of men. There have been thousands who have found their way to Hell resting upon the words of some priest or pretended teacher who taught other than the Truth of God. And yet, with this grain of caution, we cannot but commend these people who, when they had a God-sent leader, had both the commonsense and the uncommon confidence to banish their fears at his bidding, seeing that his trust was in the name of the Lord. The people were not perfect, nor was their king, but we commend them in that they did wisely when they "rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, the king of Judah."

I. Our first consideration shall be THE KIND OF MAN WHOSE WORDS ARE LIKELY TO BE RESTED ON. There are some in whose words you never have much confidence because they are flippant in their utterance. They do not appear to be sincere and those who hear them make nothing of what they say, for they are evidently making nothing of it, themselves! You cannot rest in the words of a man who contradicts himself, nor rely much upon one who is of one opinion today, who will be of another opinion tomorrow and, who, before the third day is over, will be seized with some new notion! There are men whom we all know in whose word nobody is tempted to put any kind of trust whatever! But, thanks be to God, there are in the Christian Church still some in whose words men do trust, men who are as transparent as the clearest crystal and as reliable as the best steel! These are the kind of men I want to describe and this man who won the confidence of the people of Jerusalem shall serve us as a type, thereof, and enable us to discover the kind of man whose words are likely to be rested on.

To begin with, he must be *a great man*. So it was in the case of "Hezekiah, king of Judah." If the people cannot trust their king in matters of war, in whom *can* they trust? But if they see him to be a good Sovereign, walking in the fear of God and doing his utmost for them, how shall they do otherwise than trust their king? Yet in this matter we must take care, for they who trust in the great may find themselves greatly deceived. "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." That man is not truly great who leads us away from the greatest of all, even the Lord who rules over all. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." There is a kind of greatness that is only a cover for littleness. Sometimes a great title

has great selfishness, even great sensuality lying just underneath it. But Hezekiah was not a little great man—he was truly a king. He was born a monarch, a kingly man. He was a man of royal mind and noble deed—therefore the people did not ill, when, having respect to his greatness, they “rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.”

Moreover, the man who will be trusted will be found to be *a good man*. If he is not really so, he will, at least, be *thought* to be so. Men will put great trust in the words of one whose life agrees with his teaching. If they can detect something inconsistent in his character, the man’s power is ended. But if a man is evidently carried away with the one idea of being and doing good—and consumed with the purpose of glorifying God—then his utterances have power. I know a man who is not an orator. He speaks but very plainly and yet, if I had my choice, I would sooner hear him than almost any man I ever heard, because, when he speaks, I remember the wondrous life of faith in God which accompanies his words. I will not say who he is, but almost everybody will guess. It is not what he says, but the man who says it, that makes the impression! It is the life behind the words, the holy confidence exhibited in God every day, the calm restful walk with God which everybody can see in his very face, which, to a thoughtful man, makes his feeblest accent more powerful than the most furious declamation of a mere rhetorician. As Dr. Bonar says—

**“You must be true, yourself,
If you the Truth would teach.
Your soul must overflow, if you
Another’s soul would reach—
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech.”**

The man in whose words we are likely to find rest must be a good man. Hezekiah, from all we read of him, was evidently such a man. When greatness and goodness are blended, as in his case, there is sure to be a wide influence exerted. When there is eminence of ability as well as eminence of character found in a man, it often follows that what is described in this verse is true—the people rest themselves upon his words, even as they did upon Hezekiah’s.

Again, a man whose words are to be rested upon must be *a courageous man*. Hezekiah had this qualification. He had waited upon God in prayer and knew God would deliver him, so he had bid farewell to fear. He was calm and, therefore, bold. When he spoke to the captains of the soldiers, there was no trepidation in his voice or in his manner. He spoke like one who was—

**“Calm amid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory.”**

Courage in one man breeds courage in another—but one coward has the contagion of cowardice about him—many will turn tail when one runs. But, if a man stands like a rock, unmoved, he will soon have a body of others behind him who will have borrowed courage from his example! Paul, in the storm, is an example of this. I suppose he was a little insig-

ficant-looking Jew, yet when the sailors and the soldiers were alarmed at the tempest, he calmly and quietly told them not to be afraid, and they borrowed courage from his faith. He told them that no harm would come to them—that though the ship would be lost, their lives had been given to him in answer to his prayer—and since they had fasted long, he bade them to eat, and they did eat. All his orders were carried out as fully as if he had been the centurion in command of the soldiers, or the captain in charge of the ship!

Because he was bold, he made them brave! He commanded them because he could command himself. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, may you have the courage of your convictions! May you be brave enough to *do* right and to *speak* right, and to stand up for the Gospel, whoever rails at it! If you do, you have only to bide your time and you will be master over meaner men who cannot be trusted. He that will but “hold the fort” when others are giving up their castles, shall, by-and-by, God helping him, behold a race of valiant men, who, like himself, shall believe in their Master’s coming and will not quit the field until He appears. God grant to many here to be bold in the way of holiness, in their own circle, in their own families! They must be assured that there will be found some who will rest upon their words because they see their courage.

Further, a man who is to have his words much rested in, must also be a *hearty man*. Indeed, he must be an enthusiast. Of such a spirit was Hezekiah, for we read in the last verse of the previous chapter, “and in every work that he began in the service of the House of God, and in the Law, and in the Commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart.” This is the kind of man whom people will follow! Let them but see that the whole of the man leads them, and not only a bit of him, and they will quickly learn to rely on his word. Put all your heart into what you do, or else put none of it! There are some people who seem as if they have no heart, or at least their heart is only a kind of valve for the expulsion of blood and not over vigorous in that direction, I fear. Any other kind of heart you cannot discover. Nobody will follow mere head. There must be a heart displayed by the man who would have a hearty following. If you want to lead others aright, lead them by showing that you, yourself, love the way. Be intense! Be emphatic! Throw your whole being into it! Be hearty when you are working, when you are praying, when you are singing! In all that you do for God and for your fellow Christians, let your heart be manifest—and then it is highly probable that it may happen to you, as it did to Hezekiah—that many will rest upon your words.

In the case of such a man, God will add His sanction by granting success—he will be a *prosperous man*. I did not finish the last verse of the previous chapter just now. It reads—“He did it with all his heart, *and prospered.*” He prospered because he did everything with all his heart! God set His seal to that which he did so heartily. A man may be devout and holy, but not be outwardly prospered. Such a man may do useful work for the Lord. But the man whom God chooses for a leader, He will

also qualify and bless. He will put His mark upon him—and when people see that a man is enabled by God to go from strength to strength, that his enterprises do not end in disaster—but that, by the Grace of God he leads his followers from victory to victory, they are sure to rest themselves upon his word.

Let me add, that he who could help others must be *a man who has respect for God's Word*. We may safely rest ourselves upon a man's words when, like Hezekiah, his words are full of God, and when, evidently, he has nothing to say but what God has first said to him. Such a man becomes the medium by which God speaks to your soul. "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles." Even had this been spoken by another, it was a Divine Truth and any man might have rested upon it. If any of us must be very original—if we must think out our own theology and go on speculating from day to day—our people will be very foolish if they ever rest themselves upon our fickle, vapid words!

But if the minister of Christ is as God's mouth. If he is dependent upon the Spirit of God for teaching, then God will speak through him and the people will hear. If his one aim is not to be original, but to repeat God's thought as far as he knows them—and to speak the Truth of God revealed as far as he can get a grip of it—such a man will often come to know that the people are resting themselves upon his words, for his words will be not so much his, but God's Words through him. May our prayer then be—

***"Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Your tone;
As You have sought, so let me seek
Your erring children, lost and lone."***

Here a word of caution is necessary. Since men are permitted to say words upon which other people rest, let us be careful how we speak. There may be some here who have attained, by years of holy living and deep experience, to a position of great influence—one of you in a Bible class, another in a village station, several of you, perhaps, in your pulpits. Brothers and Sisters, what a very responsible position we occupy when young people and others are resting upon our words! I will not say whether they are altogether right or wrong in doing so, but I know this is their habit. Therefore, what manner of people ought we to be! How choice should be our language! How determined we ought to be to let all our teachings be Scriptural and not to mingle the precious with the vile—remembering the promise—"If you take forth the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth."

Do not let us, even in sport, say what may injure others. I have known children take in earnest what others have said in jest. It were often better that some things were not said even in sport, for such flippant utterances have either misled the children, or they have injured the influence of those who have uttered them when they have spoken another time. Since it so happens that many of those around us are of feeble minds and need a

strong mind to guide them, let those who lead be doubly careful of their conversation and conduct! Since those who know their own weakness lean, perhaps, too much upon their teachers, let their teachers cry to God that they may be helped to teach nothing but what is right! May you and I never lead another astray even one inch! May none of us ever be in communion with that which is not true! May we stand right out from all connection with that which we feel to be contrary to the mind of God! Let us try to live in such a way that if another were to take us for an example, he might copy us through and through and do himself no harm.

I set before you a very high standard and one which no man will reach except under Divine instruction. But since the necessary teaching is freely given to all who seek it, I would urge you to be quick scholars in the School of Grace. I fear very few of us have ever reached this excellent standard, but that is no reason why we should not study our lesson with redoubled energy. Remember that Hezekiah must speak aright when the people of Jerusalem rest themselves upon his words. O Hezekiah, be not silent when you ought to speak! Speak not when you ought to be silent! And never speak except when the Lord shall open your lips, that your mouth may show forth His praise! Since you have this responsibility that the people rest upon your words, be sure to give them words solid enough and reliable enough to rest upon! As you have “worked that which was good and right and truth before the Lord,” speak also true and right and good words to the people—and then it shall be well both with them and with you.

II. In the second place, let us turn the other way and look at THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO REST ON SUCH A MAN’S WORDS. I am not going to praise all these people, nor am I going to blame them. I wish to use discrimination and judge each case upon its merits. Sometimes it is the best possible thing for a man to rest himself on the words of another—but often such a course is a very foolish one.

Children do so with their parents and if they have gracious and godly parents, they do well to rest themselves on their father’s or on their mother’s word. When I was a boy, I never doubted what my father believed. And when I was under the influence of my grandfather, who taught the Word of God, I was such a little simpleton that I never set up my judgment against his. I find that very small boys are not now so foolish! I wish they were wise enough to be as foolish as I was! When I grew up, I never suspected a doctrine because my father believed it. No, my leaning went the other way—and if my godly father found peace and comfort in a Word of God, I thought that what was good for him was good for his son. I was foolish enough to lean upon the words of my elders in this way and, somehow, though others often think that such a course is folly, I am glad that it was so.

I thank God, too, that my sons were as foolish as their father and that what their father believed had an attraction for them. I hope that they judged for themselves, as I, also, tried to do, when I came to riper years,

but, at the first, it was the words of my parents that led me to Christ. What I knew of the elements of the Gospel, I received largely, without a question, from them, and I do not think it was an ill bequest. Now, dear parents, mind that your children are able to believe in you. I like children to have fathers and mothers whom they can trust. A young Friend has written me a letter, asking me to preach a sermon on, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger." Well, will you kindly consider that I *have* preached it? I fear I could not make a long sermon of it, but it is necessary to tell some of you parents that I suspect you are not quite so considerate as you ought to be. I do not know the man for whom the word is intended, but I wish he would take the sermon as if I had preached it to him.

Now, fathers and mothers, your children do rest themselves upon your words if you are fathers and mothers worth having. Be careful, then, of what you say. I like that boy who said, "I know that it is true, for mother said it. Whatever mother says is true, and it is true if it is not true, if mother said it." It is a blessed thing when boys and girls can feel such confidence in their parents that they are sure that their word is beyond all question. It is so much easier for them to have faith in God in the days to come if, first, they have been able to have faith in their father and mother. Faith of any kind is so tender a plant that it should be carefully nourished wherever it is found. And as children often and, rightly, too, rest themselves upon the words of their parents, it behooves the parents to give them words whereon they may safely rest.

Illiterate people, who cannot read, belong to another class who must rest themselves upon the words of others. They are but grown-up children, if they are persons of no education, though I am glad to think the number of those who cannot even read their Bible for themselves is constantly decreasing. Still, there are many persons who are so taken up with daily toil that they have no opportunity of searching for themselves. Although God has given many of them gracious judgments, so that they seem to know truth from error by a kind of inward instinct, yet, for the most part, much of the teaching that they receive must come to them as the utterance of some man in whose life they believe—and whom they believe to be under a Divine influence which makes him speak continually with an endeavor for their good. Whether this is right or not, it is so. And every man who is placed in a position where many such hang upon his words, must, therefore, learn to speak only as God speaks to him, lest he should sin—and lest the hundreds who accept what he says as being true—would be led astray.

This is also the case with regard to *unconverted persons who have no spiritual discernment* and who can have none, in their first hearing of the Gospel. Very largely, men believe in Christ not only through the Scriptures, but through the testimony of those who already know the Lord. This was implied by our Savior's words in that wondrous intercession with His Father. Christ said, concerning His disciples, "Neither pray I for these alone; but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word." It

is part of the economy of Grace that the testimony of the saints shall be used of the Spirit to lead people to Christ. We bear witness to forgiveness which we have received. We bear witness to a change of heart which we have experienced. We bear witness to the power of prayer and, like the men of Sychar, the people who hear us first, believe our word, and that leads them to Christ. After they have met with Him, they may say, with much truth, "Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world." Still, it will always be true that, at the beginning, it was because of our words that they believed.

It is a large part of our ministry to bear witness to the Truth of God recorded in the Book of God and, oftentimes, the witness, himself, is believed and then what he says is believed because of the faith the hearer has in him. Although some are unworthy of such credence, yet so it does happen. Christian men, you are like the Bibles of the people. They do not read the Book, but they read *you!* And if they see Christ in you truly represented, they will, perhaps, come to the knowledge of Him. But, if you caricature Him, dreadful evil will come of it. I beseech you, be very careful! If the preacher, when he is addressing a mass of people who never read the Word of God, contorts and distorts the Truth of God, what wonder is it if the people miss the salvation of Christ altogether, seeing that they rest upon his word? If he only gives half of the Truth, or only one side of it—if he paints one doctrine out of proportion to another. If he misses the love and tenderness of Christ and even if he omits the justice and stern truthfulness of God—he may so misrepresent God and Christ, and so misinterpret the whole system of Grace to the people—that when they rest upon his words they will be resting upon a broken reed and fall to their eternal destruction!

Persons who naturally run in a groove form another class who rest upon the words of men. There are some people of considerable capacity who, nevertheless, partly from a want of elasticity of mind and partly from excess of commonsense, are very apt to keep to beaten tracks. They are not altogether to be censured, for some of them are the salt of the earth. But they are a trifle monotonous in their method of life. Still, with some, this is very natural. They are like the tramcars that only get off line by accident. Well, I think that if I were a tramcar, I should like to run on the trams after I got used to it. If they lead in the right direction, we might do much worse than travel by tram. There are, however, a number of people who always will live like that. Having attended at such a place of worship and having been brought up in the midst of a certain set of godly people, they scarcely deviate one jot from the teaching that they have received. Almost by necessity of their nature they rest on what they hear.

There is one more class I should like to mention, not because I am fond of them, but for the opposite reason—I mean *those who profess always to do their own thinking*—who will not have any creed and who say that they will not follow anybody. If you will trace them home, they are, in nine cas-

es out of ten, the worse slaves that ever lived. They are the bond-servants of some heretic or other who has put it into their heads that, in following him, they become free men! Why, there are thousands of people that laugh at us for believing in the old doctrine of the Fall of Man, who, nevertheless, rest themselves implicitly upon the words of some infidel philosopher, or else they follow some favorite heretic in broadcloth upon whom they rest their confidence through thick and thin! They speak much of their deep thought, but they never think—they make up for lack of brains by talking the jargon supposed to be spoken by highly intellectual people, though, in most cases, it requires a very vivid imagination to make the supposition. These, who thus take for granted the heterodox words of their favorite leaders, though they do not acknowledge them, incur great guilt—and their leaders are doing grievous mischief in uttering the words upon which their followers stay themselves.

Before I leave this point, I would urge you earnestly to be careful both as to the man you hear, and the words of his on which you rest. I beseech any of you who are attendants here, who are resting yourselves upon *my* words, to cease that habit! If I tell you anything that is not consistent with God's Word, away with my word, and away with me, too! If you hear from me anything which Christ would not have taught, I shall grieve to the last degree if you believe it. But if you fling it away and ascribe it to the infirmity and fallibility of the preacher, it will be better for you. Or if there are some of you here who are resting yourselves upon any other man's words, I exhort you to know thoroughly the man and his communications—and do not, even when you know him—take his words without an appeal, “to the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” Bring all men's words to the test of God's Words! “Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God.” Blindly follow no man, “But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you” from this blessed Book, “let them be accursed.”

When a man has a message from God, listen to him earnestly, with an open mind ready to be taught—but never think of making him the master of your spirit. “The people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah the king” and they did well in doing so, for he was a man worthy of their trust. But had they been under another kind of king, or a man of a different character and temperament, they might have ruined themselves by relying upon the words which he spoke to them. Again, therefore, I utter the caution—be careful both as to the man you hear and the words of his on which you rest.

III. And now I close with my third head by asking you to consider THE KIND OF WORDS THAT YOU MAY REST ON. We come to speak, now, not of the kind of *men* who speak restful words, nor of the kind of men who find rest in such words when they are spoken, but of the kind of *words* in which you and I may rest.

You may safely rest in *words which urge you to faith in God*. Are you exhorted, tonight, to lay your burden of sin down at Jesus' feet? Obey such a word as that without questioning! You may well rest on words which bid you to believe in Christ and you may, without fear, believe in Him who has all Grace and wisdom and power to save and to bless you! Through the hearing of such words, may you soon be able to say—

***“I rest my soul on Jesus,
This weary soul of mine.
His right hand me embraces,
I on His breast recline.
I love the name of Jesus,
Immanuel, Christ, the Lord—
Like fragrance on the breezes,
His name abroad is poured.”***

Are you who are Believers encouraged to roll your care on your great Father, according to that Word of God, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you”? You will do no wrong in obeying to the fullest every admonition to believe your God and to believe His Christ! If our preaching tends to create faith and foster it, it goes the right way, but, whatever clever things may be said, if the tendency is to undermine faith—and if the words you hear increase that tendency—they are mischievous, eternally mischievous, to the souls of men!

You may always rest, in the next place, on *words which are the Words of God, Himself*. If God has said it, it is sure. If those men could rest themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, the king, how is it that some of you, who are God's people, cannot rest yourselves upon the Words of God, our King? You believe His promises, you say, but still you are very restless. You have some of that terrible fever of unbelief on you! Beloved, try to practice the art of resting yourself upon the Word of God. God has promised me such and such a thing. I believe it, therefore I have it. “No,” you say, “the Word is not yet fulfilled.” Ah, but I have got it, nevertheless! If a friend gives me a check for five pounds, though I have never seen his money, I have the five pounds! I do not need to see his money, for I have his five-pound check in my pocket! I have his guarantee for the amount and though I have not received the coin, I believe that I have the five pounds, and so I have!

And if you believe that you have the blessing for which you have asked, go your way and rejoice that you have it, for it is yours in the promise, and God's promise is as valuable as God's fulfillment! Rest yourselves, then, Beloved, in the Words of God. Are you afraid of being too peaceful? Are you afraid of being too happy? Are you afraid of living too blessed a life? Are any of you afraid of having too much Heaven here below? Well, do not give way to such idle fears! The more you can rest, the more will God be pleased with you. “Comfort you, comfort you, My people,” says your God! “Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.” And if He bids *us* comfort you, you may be sure that *He* wants you to be comforted! Be comforted, therefore. Rest yourselves in His Word!

I have had to praise with bated breath those who rested on Hezekiah's word. I have thrown in little bits of necessary caution and interjection of doubt, but, if you desire to rest on *God's Word*, I need not caution you against trusting the Lord too much! Though you believe God up to the hilt. Though you believe God desperately. Though you believe God to the utmost—though you believe Him *infinitely*—He will never fail you! Your confidence in Him can never exceed that which He deserves. He will warrant it all. "Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." And again it is written, "You shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." You can never be wrong in resting upon the Words of God, Himself! Even in your greatest weakness you may look to Him and say—

***"I am trusting You for power,
You can never fail!
Words which You, Yourself, shall give me
Must prevail."***

You may always believe, also, *in words which are sealed by the Lord Jesus*. If the mark of His blood is upon any Word, you need never doubt it. If He has died, how can you perish? If He has bid you come, how can He cast you out? If you rest upon His finished work, how can you be condemned? Believe, I pray you, and rest on the blood-sprinkled Words of this wondrous Book—

***"The clouds may go and come,
And storms may sweep the sky.
The blood-sealed friendship changes not,
Your cross is ever nigh.
I change—He changes not,
The Christ can never die;
His word, not mine, the resting place,
His Truth, not mine, the tie."***

Believe also, most firmly, and rest yourself most fully on *words which have been blessed to other men*. If others have been saved by a Word, that Word will suit you. If God's promise proved true to my father, it will be true to me! There is no private interpretation of God's "great and precious promises." They are not hedged about with a fence. They are as much mine as they were Abraham's or Jacob's—as much mine as they were Peter's or Paul's—and I will have them, too, by faith, and have what those promises include! Beloved, rest yourselves upon the Words of God, upon which others have rested, and you shall find them to be as true in your experiences as in the experience of those who have gone before.

Last of all, you may surely rest upon *Words which breathe a sense of rest into the soul*. I love all the Words of God, but there are some that have an aroma of rest around them. Were you ever in such trouble that, when you read the chapter beginning with those sweet words, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me," you read it in vain? I think I never did! With the tears in my heart as well as in my eyes, I have read that blessed verse again and again—and I have been comforted. That eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a wonderful

Light of God when you are in the dark. When I read those glorious doctrines, I find golden stepping stones through the Slough of Despond. And, as for the Psalms, why the man who wrote most of them seemed to be, “not one, but all mankind’s epitome.” He has lived out all our lives—yours, mine and millions besides—his Psalms breathe peace around us and, as we accept the Truths of God they reveal, we are enabled to rest upon them!

To all of us the time will come when we shall need rest. Dear young people, however long you may live, unless the Lord descends from Heaven in Glory, the time will come when you will die. You will need a pillow, then, and, oh, may it be said of all of us, then, “The people rested themselves upon the Words of Jesus!” These promises are the best pillows for dying heads. There is one that will suit you now, and suit you then—“He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Go, Brothers and Sisters, anywhere on earth and even up to Heaven with that in your hands—“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Or will this other Word of God suit you better, “My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness”? But I need not go on giving these Words of God to you—you know them well. If you are not familiar with them, I should advise you to get a little book called *Clarke’s Precious Promises*, where you will find them all arranged. General Gordon, who was killed at Khartoum, used to carry a copy in his pocket wherever he went. And he and many others have found it to be a great help to them.

Get hold of the promises of God and when you feel downcast—when the wind is in the east, when the liver does not work, when you have a real heart-ache, when the dear child is dead, when the beloved wife is sick, when there is trouble in the house from any cause, then get you the words of the Lord—and may it always be said of you, “The people rested themselves on the words of King Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords!”

Oh, that the Holy Spirit might lead some poor soul to rest on these precious Words of God, even now, for the first time! And unto the Lord shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—2 Chronicles 32.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—23 (VERS. II), 759, 614.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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ANOTHER LESSON FROM MANASSEH'S LIFE NO. 2385

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
NOVEMBER 4, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1888.**

*“And the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen. Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria; which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.”
2 Chronicles 33:10, 11.*

THE proper way for a sinner to be brought to God is for God to speak to him and for him to hear. Manasseh would not come that way—“The Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen.” Therefore, as God determined to save the rebellious king, He fetched him back by a rougher road—He sent the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took him among the thorns.

I am going to talk to you a little about the plain and proper road by which you should come to God. And then I shall deal with those who have gone among the thorns. There may be some such characters here, tonight. Let me say that if I should happen to describe anyone very correctly, I hope he will not do as a friend did the other Monday. He had come up to London and I gave such an accurate description of him on the Sunday that he came in very indignantly to see me the next day, to know whether his wife had not written to me. He looked as if his wife and myself might, both of us, have rather hard times with him. When I assured him that I did not know his name and had never seen him or his wife, or heard a word about him, he grew a little more calm—but the portrayal of him appeared to be so accurate that I could not help saying to him, “Surely *God* has spoken to you. Take the message home to yourself. Do not blame me or your wife, but blame yourself to think that such a description should apply to you.”

Now, first, as I have already told you, the proper way for a sinner to be brought to God is for God to speak to him and for him to hear. In Holy Scripture, God warns men. He tells them that sin is an evil thing and that if it is persisted in, it will bring endless ruin to them. Now, the proper thing for the man who hears that warning is to take heed to it, to run to the helm of his vessel and steer the ship in another direction. God grant that you and I may not be as the horse and as the mule, that need

bit and bridle, but may we listen at once to the warning so kindly given and turn from every evil way!

Sometimes God speaks by way of invitation. "Come to Me," He says. "Return to Me. I am ready to forgive. I delight in mercy." Now, the proper way for one who hears this invitation is not to wait and linger, but to accept it at once. "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord invites you to come to the ark to escape the flood, to come to the banquet to satisfy your hunger, to come to the sacred bath, that you may wash and be clean, as he of old did who washed his leprosy away in the Jordan. Whenever God speaks to us in any way, let us listen and, listening, let us obey—especially when He sets before us Jesus, Crucified, and says to us, "Trust in Him and you shall be forgiven. Accept the Great Sacrifice! Believe that your sin was laid on Him and you shall be forever clear of it." Oh, that you would accept Him at once! We do not need to go round about, over hedge and ditch, to find the Savior—there is the Cross, look to it and live!

I was asking a friend, just now, concerning a sermon he had heard, and he said, "It was a very clever sermon, but if anybody had followed its teaching, he would not have been within 6,000 miles of the Cross of Christ." Well now, that is *not* what I want to do with you, to lead you thousands of miles away from Christ! But, as God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin, I pray that you may accept Him and live by Him. "Look unto Me," He says, "and be you saved."—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

May the Holy Spirit, whose word is, "Today, today, today," speak with power to your hearts that you may hear because God speaks!

You understand the way sinners are saved, do you not? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We hear the Gospel, we believe it, we live by it—there is the whole machinery of salvation! We preach a Crucified Savior, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Yet we cannot beat it into men's heads that salvation is as simple as this! I remember how Martin Luther said that it was so difficult to get the Doctrine of Justification by Faith into the minds of the Wittenbergers that he had half a mind to take the Bible and beat them over the head with it! I am afraid that he would not have gotten the Truth of God into their heads that way. "Look," he said, "if these sectaries come to you with a new doctrine, you stare at it like a cow at a new gate! But when I bring you the Gospel, you will not even look at it, much less will you receive it!" Oh, that the Spirit of God would deliver us from such folly, that we may accept Christ, trust Him, and live!

This is the happy way of salvation, to hear, believe, and live. Men go about to try and invent a salvation that makes its followers miserable—you must have so many wretched feelings, so much despair, so many gloomy thoughts. No, no! The Gospel message is, "Believe and live." Why should men need to make their case worse than it is? It is already as bad as it can be! Why struggle to find an impossible addition to your present danger? Why try to import foreign and extraneous griefs into your already unbearable misery? I was trying, once, to explain the Gospel to a young woman, so as to make it very simple to her, but she said, "Why,

dear Sir, I thought I was to *feel* a great deal! My father, before he found Christ, was so bad that he had to be put away in a lunatic asylum, and I thought I must be like he was." That is the rough way that many people think they have to travel. But the proper way, the *Scriptural* way is, "Come to Jesus, put your trust in Him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This, then, is the happy way!

It is also an *accessible* way. If I preached to you that you must have so much despair, so much of terrible agony of soul, you might say, "I cannot go along that road. I am a young man full of spirit. I am a young woman with ruddy cheeks and happy heart. Must I be miserable in order to find Christ?" Ah, my dear Friend, it is not so put! You *will* have, you *must* have, sorrow for sin. That, the Lord will *give* you—you have not to make it yourself—the Holy Spirit will work it in your heart if you yield yourself wholly to Him. How often have I told you that if you cannot come to Christ *with* a broken heart, come to Christ *for* a broken heart! If you have not a proper sense of sin, I do not expect that you ever will have it until the Holy Spirit *gives* it to you! Come to Him and trust Him to work it in you. Remember that repentance *does not come before* faith—it is a kind of Siamese twin with faith! Which comes first, I cannot tell, until you tell me which spoke in a wheel moves first when the whole wheel moves!

Repentance is the lovely sister of Faith, if it is not Faith's first-born child. *So you are not to repent, first, and then to come to Christ.* Bring nothing to the Savior except your nothingness! Come to Him empty, just as you are. In a short time, some of the fruits in our gardens will be ripening. Suppose we have a fine apple tree, or pear tree, with fruit on it, quite ripe. As you stand under it, you can imagine that you hear it talk. Trees have a language—shall I interpret what that tree is saying? It says, "Baskets, bring baskets." What for? Here is a basket, but I dare not bring it. "Why not?" asks the tree. Because it is empty. If the basket were full, I would bring it. But the tree will say to you, "I need *empty* baskets, that I may fill them with fruit." So Jesus needs nothing of you but your emptiness—and you may come to Him just as you are. In fact, *this is the only way to come to Him aright.* If you live in the country, where you have an old-fashioned well, do you ever say to yourself, "I dare not let this bucket down till I fill it"? Everybody would laugh at you if you talked like that! You let it down *empty* that it may be filled! So let your empty soul down into the deep well of Christ's infinite merit, that it may be filled to the brim!

Thus, you see, this is a happy way, and it is an accessible way. You can come to Christ, can you not, in such a way as this?

It is, next, a way which has frequently been taken. Talking, some time ago, about the difficulties I had when coming to Christ, I said to some Brothers and Sisters present, "They were self-made difficulties. They were not necessary, except it was that I might know the rough road in order that I might the better help others." And I remember that our beloved and honored Brother, William Olney, said, "I never had such difficulties at all. I know nothing whatever about them. As a boy, I trusted in Christ and I found peace with God at once." I believe that there are hun-

dreds and thousands of earnest Christians who simply come to Jesus without any particular pang of conscience, or grief of heart—and they are as truly in Christ as any of us—and their *lives* prove it! This is a way that has been frequently taken—all men are *not* fools—some do take the straight and narrow road, by God's Grace, that leads to everlasting life. I pray you, therefore, my dear unconverted Hearer, especially you young men, and you young women, to enter the King's highway which leads to everlasting Glory! Hear while God speaks, believe what God says, and live forever!

Is not this the Gospel way? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Is it not the right way? Where else should we look but to our Savior? What can we do but look, for we have nothing of our own to bring? Let us even now look out of ourselves to Christ and live forever! Would it not be a blessed circumstance if, without any further question about the matter, every unconverted man and woman here tonight would close in with Christ, crying, "I will perish, if I do perish, at the foot of the Cross! I will trust you, Emmanuel, the unique Savior, the one and only Interposer, the one Mediator who can lay His hand on God by virtue of His own Godhead, and on man by reason of His Manhood, and join us both together in a blessed league of endless amity"? May that be done for each one of you! Let the prayer go up from you who know the Lord, you who can pray—"Lord, save the whole congregation!" What a congregation it is! Every Sabbath, morning and night, these masses gather here! Lord, why do they come if You do not intend to bless them? Shall they come up like waves of the sea and then go rolling back, again, and leave not a trace behind? No, rather may some precious pearls be washed up on the shores of salvation, tonight, that shall adorn the crown of Christ forever and ever!

But now I come to the tug of war in the other side of my subject. When men reject this simple and easy way of trusting Christ, then and there the Lord might leave them. And if He *did* leave them, woe would be unto them! There is no greater curse than that solemn sentence, "Let him alone." But, instead thereof, the Lord begins to take men along a rough road. Let me read the text again—"The Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen. Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." Perhaps He will do the same with you. It may be that He is dealing thus with some of you and here is the point where I thought it was likely that I might describe somebody's case very particularly.

I. First, THE LORD OFTEN ALLOWS TEMPORAL TRIALS TO TAKE MEN CAPTIVE. It often happens that God, with a view to the salvation of men, sends them temporal trials to capture them, as Manasseh was taken "among the thorns." Is it so, my Friend, that after hearing the Gospel for years, you are still unconverted, and that God is now beginning no longer to speak to you with words, but to deal with you by blows?

I have known persons in this case to find *everything going wrong with them in business*. It has seemed as if the current which had flowed toward them had suddenly dried up, or flowed backward! Do what they may, nothing prospers. There is a blight and a mildew on all their crops. They are disappointed where they had the highest hopes. Their speculations all turn out failures. Everything goes wrong. This is one of the black dogs with which the Good Shepherd fetches home His stray sheep—perhaps He is thus going to fetch *you* home. I pray that He may!

In the case of another, *the man finds himself out of work*. He has always been able to bring in enough for the wife and the family, but now he is out of a job and cannot get employment. He has tramped the streets of London till he has worn out his boots but he cannot find anything to do. The table had a very scanty meal upon it, today, and this Sabbath has been a very sorrowful day in that home. We read of one, the other day, who destroyed himself because he could not bear to be so long without work. Do not so act, I pray you! Oh, do not think of such an evil course as that! Rather say to yourself, "Here is another of the Lord's black dogs come after me. I would not go when the Shepherd called me, but He means to have me, and so I am being tried in this way."

If, like Jonah's gourd, your hope withers and you feel ready to faint, do not faint, but be of good courage—some of these rough waves may wash you on the Rock. I am sure I pray that they may. Come and flee away, flee away, flee away, now, to the God who smites you in love! Kiss the rod and yield yourself to Him who holds it, for these troublous ways are often the very ones by which the Lord brings His exiled children home to His heart!

Sometimes *God permits men to fall into very extraordinary troubles*. Some of you have read the life of Mr. John Newton. As a young man you know how boldly wicked he was. What a shameful thing it was for him, the son of parents who were able to support him in comfort, to be found on the Gold Coast, literally a slave, with scarcely a rag to cover his nakedness! Yet this severe discipline was necessary. He would never have been the Lord's free man if he had not been man's slave. If he had not been brought as low as that, he might never have looked up to God! I have known some people get into very strange circumstances, so remarkable that if they were to describe them, they would hardly be believed—and I may be speaking to some such just now. Horror has taken hold upon you! Your condition has become indescribable, yet, perhaps, this is the only point of view from which your eyes will begin to see your Savior! It is strange that men should need to be flogged to Christ, but they do. If you will not come by the easy way, you shall come by the rough road. And if a call is not enough, you shall be made to smart—but, by His Grace, you shall come, for the Lord means to save you! Yield to Him, I pray you! You have the hook in your jaws, now, and the more you pull, the more that hook will tear and the more you will be made to bleed! But the great Fisherman will never lose you. I have come with the landing net, to see what can be done to get you safely on the bank. Oh, for

almighty Grace to make your sharpest trials the surest way of saving your soul!

Very frequently does it happen that persons are dealt with by *bodily affliction*. One said that he would never have seen Christ if he had not been blinded. It was only when his eyesight failed that, by faith, he looked to his Savior. Another, who had lost both his legs, declared that it was the best thing that ever happened to him, for he could no longer go with his evil companions in the ways of amusement and folly. He was brought to the House of God and there the Lord met with him! So the doctor tells you that your lungs are affected and, he says, he hardly thinks that you will recover. God is speaking to you somewhat roughly by that dread disease, but listen to its voice! Let the consumption warn you that your *sin* should be consumed! Many and many a time, headache and heartache have brought sufferers to their knees and made them turn to God. If I am addressing any who are in the condition—most pitiable and sad—of being likely to end their days in the hospital, let me interpret to them the voice of God in this trying dispensation—“Turn you, turn you to Him that smites you; turn at once unto the Lord, and live.”

Another very likely means by which God takes men among the thorns and brings them to Himself, is *the loss of dear friends*. A dying mother, in her death, has been mother in a *spiritual* sense to those whom she brought forth naturally. How often has a wife beckoned her husband to Heaven! And the dear children of London who die so numerously, are among the ablest missionaries of the Cross! How they speak to the father's heart! How the mother is moved as she remembers little Jane and the hymn she sang when she came home from Sunday school. And what little Harry said about meeting mother with Jesus in Heaven! God often brings men and women to Himself by taking their children from them. There was a sheep that would not follow the shepherd, so He stooped down and took the lamb up in His bosom, and walked away with it—and then the mother followed bleating after him. May it be so with all of you who have lost dear children! May you follow that gentle Jesus who has gathered your lambs into His bosom in Heaven! But you do not want to lose your children, do you? No, and you do not want to lose your wife or your mother. Then follow Jesus without needing such trials.

In brief, all I have been saying amounts to this—take the old road by the Cross of Christ and do not need to have your path strewn with thorns! Come to Jesus just as you are, and come now! Spirit of God, draw them! I feel that my words are so feeble when I talk to you about this great salvation. What can *I* do? If you are to be saved, the arm of God must be revealed—and *then* the work *will* be done!

II. I am going, now, a step farther. Manasseh was not only taken “among the thorns,” but he was “bound with fetters.” So The LORD SOMETIMES PERMITS MEN TO BE BOUND BY MENTAL TRIALS.

All other trials put together can never be compared with mental trials. I mean such as these. For instance, *when sin ceases to afford pleasure*. The man used to be a very jovial companion. He could sing a comic song and he was fine company, but, all of a sudden, he lost all that pleasure

and he could enjoy it no longer. If he is taken to the theater, it seems all hollow to him. He went only a few nights, ago, and when he came back, he said, "Pooh! Call that amusement? It is worse than hard work." The very things that once made him all aglow with delight do not affect him, now, nor cast a single ray of light on his path! He has lost all zeal for that which he once loved in the way of sinning!

Beside that, *his daily avocation has become distasteful*. He used to take an interest in his business, but he has no pleasure in it now—it seems a mechanical drudgery. His life has turned into a treadmill, all hard work without an atom of joy. Friend, if this is your case, God is dealing with you! He knows how to pull your proud spirit down. He can bring your gaiety into the very dust and you, who danced and reveled, the other day, will mourn in sackcloth and ashes when He begins to visit you.

Worse, even, than this, *your old sins come out of their hiding places*. You buried them long ago. You forgot all about them. You never thought of seeing any more of them, but now they haunt you, those ghosts of your former sins! You are like a man on one of the Russian plains when the snow has fallen deeply. The wolves, your old sins, are after you—you have tried to drive hard and you have given up one habit after another to the wolves, but here they come! You can hear their howl behind you! You will have to give up something more and on you speed, lashing the coursers of your resolution, yet you cannot escape from the cruel pack! They are upon you, they will tear you in pieces! Even when you are asleep, you hear them in your dreams. When you wake in the morning, you can still hear them. I remember when, at night, I used to dream of Hell. And when I woke in the morning, and all day long, I had a horrible remembrance of my past iniquities which I could not put away. Are you getting fettered like this? If so, I cannot say that I regret it, for, so long as you are saved, I shall not mind the roughness of the road if you will not come by a smoother one!

It may be that you have *great inability in prayer*. I heard you say "Why, I can pray when I like!" Can you? "Oh, we have only to say, 'God have mercy upon us!' and all will be right." Yes, but you do not find it so now, do you? You have been praying, but you have not been heard. You have cried to God, but you find no peace. You have gone on pleading, but you have found no rest. This is where you are now, with an iron Heaven above that reverberates with your cry. Ah, poor Soul, yours is a sorrowful condition, but this is the way they must go who will not take the easier road to Heaven! If God means to save you, He will save you even thus, as you will not hear His voice and live.

I daresay, too, that now you feel *a great need of power to grasp the promises*. If, in preaching, I say anything dreadful, you will believe it and take it home to yourself. If there is a threat, you will cry, "Ah, that is true! That is true to me!" But when I utter a sweet word of encouragement, you say, "Oh, I dare not take that! It would be too presumptuous." And when a glorious promise is set before you, you say, "I wish that I could appropriate *that*, but it is too good to be true to *me*." I am only tell-

ing you what I have gone through, myself, therefore I can speak, I was going to say, as one who knows every inch of the ground. Oh, what a fool I was that I did not believe in Christ the straight way, but that I must need to go round this road of learning my own nothingness and powerlessness—and learning it by a painful and bitter experience!

And, dear Friend, if I understand your position, you have *a fear of death and a dread of judgment upon you*. “Oh,” you say within yourself, “the wrath to come, the wrath to come!” It is no use for anybody to preach to you the new and false doctrine, you know very well that—

“There is a dreadful Hell,”

for you have the premonition of it in your own conscience, and you cannot rest because of it! Well, well, this is the way by which the Lord will drive you to Himself! The captains of the host of the king of Assyria have taken you among the thorns, bound you with fetters and brought you down to Babylon. You seem to be under the cruel dominion of Satan—you hear about Zion, but you are carried away to Babylon—you are an exile in a strange land!

There is one thing I want to say to you, and then I will turn away from this point. If you are in the power of the enemy, but you are not *willingly* there, you will get away from it. You remember Mr. Bunyan's description of Giant Slay-Good? He would go up and down the heavenly road leading to the Celestial City and lay hold of the pilgrims, one by one, to take them into his den and pick their bones. But Mr. Feeble-Mind said that if they did not come there willingly, and if they needed to escape, they would escape. Now I want you to gather comfort out of that Truth of God. You do not want to be a slave to Satan. You do not wish to remain in doubt and fear, do you? “Want to remain as I am?” you say, “I would give my right hand to get out of this cruel bondage! I would yield both my eyes with cheerfulness if the Light of God might, thereby, come into my soul.” You need not give up your hands or your eyes! And you shall not perish—you shall not die, but live! The Lord speaks comfort to you from this story of Manasseh in Babylon.

Listen to two or three observations and then I will close. In order to your comfort and peace, first, *know that the Lord is God*. You did not know it. You refused to know it, but know it now. When the Lord comes to try conclusions with a man, and puts out His almighty power, it is not long before that man will know that Jehovah is God, indeed! If we learn it quickly, as Manasseh did—“Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God”—it will be for our salvation. But if we are very slow in learning it, like Pharaoh was, we shall have to learn it all the same, but it will be to our destruction! “Who is the Lord? Who is the Lord?” asked Pharaoh. The Lord soon gave him an answer, for the water was turned into blood and the frogs were even in his majesty's bed-chamber!

“Who is the Lord?” Listen to the thunder! Hear the rattling of the hail! Sit still in the darkness, the darkness that might be felt! Pharaoh began to make a shrewd guess as to who Jehovah was and he pulled in his horns a good deal, and promised to yield this, and yield that. But by the time Jehovah's 10TH bolt had been launched against him, and his first-born son was dead, then he knew who God was! Remember the result of

that great battle and see who it is against Whom you are contending. Throw down your weapons! Put an end to such a mad warfare! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not a man contend with his Maker!

That done, *humble yourself before the Lord* as Manasseh did. The lower you lie before God, the better. Stretch yourself flat down upon His promise. Have no pleas, make no excuses. Down, Sir, down! You cannot lie too low. Off with those feathers of pride! Remember how God said to the children of Israel, "Put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what to do to you." Fling away all thoughts of pride and human merit, and put a rope around your neck! Come before God like a condemned criminal who only owes his present absence out of Hell to infinite, unspeakable mercy! Now you are getting where God can bless you! It is impossible to pardon a man unless he is guilty. I insult him if I offer to forgive him for an offense he never committed. But you are guilty before God! Then confess your iniquity and transgression, and come before the Lord with penitent acknowledgments of all your wanderings out of the way of holiness.

What next? Well, do as Manasseh did, *begin to pray*. Cry mightily unto the Lord, but do, also, this thing, as I have twice bid you, tonight—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I do not wonder that the Church of Rome puts up the cross everywhere. It becomes idolatry to worship a symbol; but if the symbol did no more than remind us of a Crucified Savior, that might be a different matter, for it is a Crucified Savior that we need always to remember. Christ died for sinners. Christ died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly."

Now, look this way, look to Jesus. Do not look 20 ways, look only this *one* way. The Son of God, the Son of Man, bore sin in His own body on the tree. I have often seen, upon crosses in Italy, these words, "*Spes unica*," the unique hope, the only hope of a sinner. Salvation is all in Christ! It is not what *you* are, nor what you ever will be—your hope lies in Jesus Christ—dead, buried, risen again, pleading at the right hand of God, coming again in Glory! Rest there, my beloved Hearer! Rest there, *now*, whether you have come by the old original right way, or have come over hedge and ditch as I did, through the thorns and through the sea! So long as you get to Christ, I care very little how you come. "What is the right way of coming to Christ?" asked one. Well, if you get to Him at all, *any way* is the right way and, after all, there is no long journey to take to get to Christ! Where you are, tonight. Where you sit in that pew or those aisles, look to Jesus by faith and the great transaction is done—and you are saved!

What do I mean by your being saved—that you will thereby escape Hell? You will do that, but I am not talking about Hell just now. You will escape from the *power of sin*—that is something far more to be thought of. You will escape from the *love of sin* and from a *life of sin*. Holiness will be worked in you. You will be born a child of God. May the Lord grant it to every one of you! If the Savior were to say to me, tonight, "I will give

you every soul but one in the Tabernacle, and you are to pick out the one that is to be lost," I would not pick one of those little girls over yonder and, as I look round this gallery, I would not select any of you old gentlemen, nor the young ones, either. Where would I find the soul that would be lost? I thank God that I am not condemned to make such a terrible choice as that! But, I pray you, do not make it yourself! Do not make it yourself! May God in mercy lead you to say, "If there is only one soul that will look to Christ, tonight, I will be that one." While I stop a minute, look, look, LOOK. Look to Jesus, look and live! And to His dear name shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 38.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

Remember, although this is a very sorrowful Psalm, it was written by a man of God. It will show you what a terrible thing sin must be, for even a child of God feels the smart of it very grievously. This is not the language of an unforgiven sinner—it is the cry of a saint who, for a while, has sinned and is feeling the bitterness of his transgression.

Verse 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath.* "If You do rebuke me, O Lord, do it gently! Be not angry with me, for I cannot bear it, I shall die under it. O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath."

1. *Neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure.* "Chasten me, it will do me good; it is necessary; it is profitable; but not in Your displeasure, certainly not in Your hot displeasure." The man of God is more afraid of God's anger than he is of suffering. He does not object to affliction—what he does fear is any degree of the wrath of God in the chastisement.

2. *For Your arrows stick fast in me.* Does God shoot at His own children? Yes, but only that He may kill the sin in them. And He knows how to make His arrows stick, and stick fast, too, in His own dear children. The Lord hates sin with a perfect hatred. Even when sin was laid on Christ, even though it was none of His, yet the Father forsook Him. He will not endure sin anywhere, but He hates it most in those whom He loves most—"Your arrows stick fast in me."

2. *And Your hand presses me sorely.* As if God's hand pressed heavily upon the soul of David. I remind you again that this was a man of God who thus cried out. If any of you, who are not the children of God, are feeling the heavy hand of the Lord on account of your sin, do not wonder at it. If His own children do not escape the rod, He is not likely to spare you! See into what a terrible condition David came, as he tells us in the third verse.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger.* He felt as if his very flesh was decaying, rotting, dissolving, and that there was no soundness in it. When God deals with men in a way of anger, they cannot stand against Him any more than the wax can resist the heat of the furnace. Beware, I pray you, that you provoke not God's eternal wrath in

Hell, for even here it is not to be borne! What will it be when mercy's gate is closed? "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger."

3. *Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* His very bones suffered through his sin. He could not rest, he turned over and over in his bed, but he could not find a place soft enough to lie upon in peace. Sin will make any man's bones ache when once his conscience is really quickened and, with David, he will cry, "There is no rest in my bones because of my sin."

4. *For my iniquities are gone over my head.* David was like a man who has sunk seven fathoms deep! Big waves of iniquity rolled over him and he saw no light, no hope, no way of escape.

4. *As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* It is a great mercy when sin is a burden, for, when it becomes too heavy for us to bear, Christ will bear it! A man is in an evil case when he finds no burden in sin, when he thinks he is quite able to bear it himself! But he to whom sin is an insupportable, intolerable load, is already on the road to mercy. See how the Psalmist goes on to show that his case is still worse.

5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.* He got to be so bad that he could not bear himself! His sorrow on account of his folly had made him feel as if he were a corrupt being, like one suffering with a foul cancer, unfitted for the company of his friends—"My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." As I read that verse, it brings up memories of my own state of mind before I found the Savior. Look at the title of the Psalm—"To bring to remembrance." That is just what it has done with me. Perhaps it is doing the same with some of you.

6. *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.* I again remind you that this is a child of God, a man who had enjoyed the Light of God's Countenance, and yet he was in this sad state. Do not utterly condemn yourselves. Do not say that you are not the people of God because you are troubled in heart. But if you really are *not* God's people as yet, but only seekers after Him, do not wonder if sin greatly grieves and vexes you.

7-9. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You* The first beam of comfort comes in here. "Lord, I am almost at death's door, yet You know my desire; I do not love sin, I wish to be a true Believer, I desire to be holy. Lord, all my desire is before You. You can read it as if it were written in a book. I need not speak, for I would only spoil my case with my words; but all my desire is before You."

9. *And my groaning is not hid from You.* "I can hide my groaning in a measure from my fellow creatures. I try to suppress my moans when anybody is near, but my groaning is not hid from You." Thank God there is not a tear in any eye but God sees it, nor a groan in any heart but God hears it! Make much of this Truth of God and find sweet consolation in it.

10. *My heart pants.* That is the best sort of prayer in all the world, when there are no words, but in silence there is a panting and longing af-

ter God! We cannot explain what this panting is, but if you have ever seen a hunted stag panting for breath, you have some idea what David meant when he said, "My heart pants."

10. *My strength fails me.* That is good prayer, too. "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I cannot pray, I do pray. When my strength fails me, then God's strength comes in to help me.

10, 11. *As for the sight of my eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sores and my kinsmen stand afar off.* If you have ever had much trouble, you will find that your friends are rather scarce at such times. Friends are very much like swallows—they twitter about us in the summer and they build their nests under our eaves—but where are they in the winter? Ah, where are they? You may ask the question, but who can answer it? Sorrow is not a thing which attracts company. Men naturally hide themselves from grieving companions. So David says, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sores and my kinsmen stand afar off."

12, 13. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth.* It is a fine thing, when you are slandered, not to hear it. And it is a better thing to never reply to it. I have always tried to possess one deaf ear and one blind eye—and I believe that the deaf ear is the better ear, and the blind eye by far the more useful of the two! Do not remember the injury that is done to you, try to forget it and pass it over. Do not go about the world determined to grasp every red-hot iron that any fool holds out before you. Let it alone! It will be for your own good and for God's Glory to be very patient under the slander of the wicked.

14, 15. *Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in You, O LORD, do I hope: You will hear, O Lord my God.* So the Psalmist, by his example, encourages you to take your troubles to God, and not to handle them yourselves. Spread them before Him and trust in Him to deliver you in His own time and way.

16-21. *For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. But my enemies are lively, and they are strong and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are my adversaries; because I follow the thing that is good. Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.* The persecuted Psalmist resorts to his God. Let us do the same when we, also, are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

22. *Make haste to help me, O lord my Salvation.* David's case is urgent and his plea is earnest. If we are in a like case, let us also cry, "Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—492, 584, 606.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT “PRODIGAL”

NO. 3354

A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God.”
2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

WHEN we wish to recommend a physician to a friend who is very ill, we are in the habit of mentioning certain cures which he has worked. And when we can produce several astonishing instances, we feel that we are going the right way to work to convince the judgment of our friend and to win his confidence in the doctor. Now, it is our impression that very many are anxious to be saved by the Grace of God, who, nevertheless, have not dared to trust the great Healer of souls. They know that they are in great danger, but they are reluctant to go to “the Beloved Physician.” They are grievously afraid because of the greatness of their sins and they are filled with doubt and unbelief as to the possibility of their salvation on account of their singular sinfulness. Therefore, it struck me that if I could set before them a number of Scriptural instances of wonderful conversions, it might tend to encourage hope in Christ in their hearts and, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, it might be the means of leading them to trust and try our Lord Jesus, out of whose very garments virtue flows. Perhaps, dear Friends, as you shall see how the Lord, the Healer, has looked on one and another, and restored them from the horrible disease of sin, you, too, who feel yourselves so far gone, may pluck up courage and say, “If He healed others, why should He not also heal me? I, too, will touch His garment’s hem and see if He will not make me perfectly whole.” How I wish that poor souls knew how ready my Lord Jesus is to save them! Then they would not stay back if they knew how eager He is to have mercy on the guilty! I pine within my soul to lead you to Jesus that you may be blest! That is the desire of my heart in introducing to you the case of Manasseh, whom I select from the Old Testament as a very prominent instance of glaring sin and of amazing Grace!

We do not find many of what we can accurately call conversions in the Old Testament. It is a record of a dim dispensation in which we rather see the types of things than the things, themselves, but I should suppose that the priests, if they had been inspired to write what they often heard,

would have been able to tell of many instances of deep conviction which would be made known in connection with the Sin Offerings and the Trespass Offerings—and they probably saw many instances of persons who henceforth led a new life and ceased from the sin which they had confessed over the victim's head. Of conviction, confession and conversion, they must have seen a great deal, but records we have none. On this account the story of the madly wicked king who was led to humble himself greatly before God is all the more valuable and it is matter for thankfulness that it is so remarkable! Every item of it reflects glory upon the amazing Grace of God and, indeed, compels us to exclaim, "Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?"

We will waste no time on a preface, but come at once to the life story of Manasseh, and look, first, at *his circumstances*. Then consider him as *a great sinner*. And afterwards, with greater comfort, view him *as a remarkable convert*. First, let us notice—

I. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.

A man's sin may be heightened by his position, or, on the other hand, the condition in which he is placed may suggest some alleviating considerations which, in all fairness, should be remembered. Now, with regard to Manasseh, we find that *he was the child of an eminently godly father*—the son of a king who, with all his mistakes, was sound in heart towards God. Hezekiah "worked that which was good, and right, and truth before the Lord his God." He was a man mighty in prayer and found deliverance thereby in the hour of great peril through the invasion of Sennacherib. Hezekiah was a man whose life was so precious in the sight of the Lord that in answer to his cries, He gave him a new lease on life and spared him yet another 15 years. It is a great thing for a youth to have a godly father to train his tender mind. And, even though such a parent should be taken away early, yet the privilege is an eminent one. As for Manasseh's mother, we cannot say with certainty that she was a godly woman, but let us hope that as her name was Hephzibah—"My delight is in her"—she, too, was delightful for grace and piety. Isaiah seems to have taken her name and to have applied it to the church—"you shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in you," and we may suppose that he would hardly have done so unless there had been some sweet associations therewith. Let us trust that Queen Hephzibah was, indeed, God's delight and, if so, Manasseh had the special favor of having two parents who would train him up in the way he should go. Such a happy start in life renders his later sin the more heinous!

But, in all truthfulness, we have to mention, next, that *he was a child born to his father in his later years*, after his life had been lengthened by special license from above. He was the child of his parent's desire—an heir born after the father had expected to die childless and, therefore, it is not at all unlikely that he was a spoiled child. It is very possible that being highly prized, he was also greatly indulged and, if so, he was in special danger. Those children who are doted upon by their parents are

greatly to be pitied, for they are apt to be allowed to have their own way—and a youth's own way is sure to be a wrong one! Fathers, in such cases, are apt to play the part of Eli, of whom we read that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. It was no wonder that Adonijah disturbed the dying moments of David when we read that, "his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so?" Nor need we marvel that Absalom almost broke his father's heart if this was the manner of his bringing up! Even though at 12 years of age Manasseh could not have fully developed his character, yet it may have been warped by those early days of admiration and indulgence. Parents, take note of this—and you petted children do the same.

Remember that *Manasseh lost his father at twelve years of age*. I do not know a greater trial for a family than for the head of the house to be taken away while the children are young. Just when the guiding, encouraging and restraining power of the father is needed, it is mournful to see it removed. How mysterious it seems to us when a large family loses the wise guide of the household at the very time when his influence is most needed by the growing boys and girls. Too often in such a case the young people have broken away from all restraint and the loss of their father has been the loss of everything. Manasseh, the prince who seemed born under such favorable circumstances for the production of a gracious character, was much to be pitied when the good king, his father, was called away and his tender son was left alone amid flatterers and idolaters!

Remember, too, that *Manasseh was placed in a giddy position as a child*, for he mounted the throne at 12 years of age. A child upon a throne is a child out of its natural place. Such high and hard places are not for boys! Now and then such a child turns out to be a Josiah, the very delight of mankind, but the probabilities are very much against its being so. "Woe unto you, O land, when your king is a child." It is ill for a child to sway a scepter, but "it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." A fierce fire of temptation blazes around a youthful throne. Sycophants and flatterers are sure to surround a boy prince, pandering to his worst desires and arousing that part of his nature which most needs to be repressed. No doubt there were good people whom Hezekiah had gathered in his courts, but then they could not flatter as well as the evil party which had been repressed for awhile, but still remained strong in the land. Though Hezekiah had set up the worship of God and had done his best to root out idolatry, yet the idolatrous party was far from being extinct and the common people were sadly careless and irreligious! Isaiah, in his opening Chapter, describes the condition of the land by saying, "Israel does not know, my people do not consider. Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." The nation was not steadfast like king Hezekiah—it worshipped Jehovah when

compelled by royal authority—but it was ready enough to turn aside to its idols. The idolatrous party—which I might liken to the papists and the people who worshipped on the high places—who were the ritualistic party of the day, came around the young king, fawning, flattering and cajoling. By pleasing the taste of the boy-king, and indulging his vices, they undermined in his esteem the orthodox worshippers of God, whom I may call the evangelical school. He yielded himself up readily to their influence and when he was old enough, became the head of the idolatrous party, throwing his whole soul into it and, with all the might of his nature and the force of his authority, labored to stamp out the pure worship of the Most High God and to set up those debasing idolatries which his father Hezekiah had so much abhorred! Look at him, then, as a mere child placed in a condition of great danger, led astray at first and afterwards becoming a ringleader in iniquity.

These are some of the circumstances of Manasseh's life. Now, I have a heavy task and one which saddens me, though it is concerning one who lived so many hundreds of years ago—I have mournfully to describe Manasseh as—

II. A GREAT SINNER.

If you will turn to the Second of Chronicles, Chapter 33, and will follow the verses, you will get a view of this atrocious offender. In the second verse we read, "*He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.*" That is a description of his life as a whole. Take his 55 years' reign in the bulk, notwithstanding the repentance of his later years, it is a true estimate of it all to say that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord." He was a son of David, but he was the very reverse of that king who was always faithful in his loyalty to the one only God of Israel! David's blood was in his veins, but David's ways were not in his heart. He was a wild, degenerate shoot of a noble vine!

No, the description of his life is more intensely black than the summary might suggest, for it is said that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel." He seemed to have taken for his models the men whom God condemned to die for capital offenses against His Law! How deplorable that one who was cradled in piety must, notwithstanding, not be satisfied until the very scum of society, which God had skimmed off as from the pot and thrown away with detestation, should be his models and his tutors! Yet we have known young men to be doubly perverse—possessed, as it were, by the devil, if not by seven devils at once! We are all depraved, but in some that depravity manifests itself in an extraordinary love of low, coarse society and of everything that is irreligious and unlovely. I have in my mind's eye now—and it makes my heart melt as I remember it—sons of men with whom I have been glad to associate and who were always happy to aid me in the Lord's work, but now their sons find their most congenial company among the drunken and profane, the gamblers and debauchers—and if, perchance, they see

their father’s friend, they look aside or slink away, anxious to be unobserved by him, scarcely brooking to have it known that they know the man! This is the unhappiest thing that can occur to us parents. You who have buried your little children. You who have wept so bitterly when your dear babes were snatched from your bosoms may far prefer that sorrow to having your sons and your daughters live to dishonor your name by plunging into glaring sin! Manasseh was a son of this character and could his father have foreseen what he would live to do, he would have preferred death rather than have lived to be the sire of such a monster of iniquity!

It is noted concerning him, in the next place, that *he undid what his father had done*. In the third verse we read, “He built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down.” I have known many a man who has had no respect for God who, nevertheless, has had such a regard for his father’s memory that he would not scoff at things which his father held sacred. But this man had cast off all filial reverence! He cared not what his godly parent might have thought—he gloried in building up what his father had thrown down—and throwing down what his father had built up!

This is a great evil, for a man, in order to be guilty of it, has to do violence to some of the strongest and best instincts of his nature. Is that your case, my Friend? Are you doing exactly that which you know would have broken your father’s heart? Is your conduct such that your mother would have been brought to her grave by it had she been here? Are you fighting against the Lord God of your father? May the Lord in mercy stop your guilty hand lest the curse of Absalom come upon you! Turn not aside from your father’s God! Follow in the godly footsteps of your mother and set not yourself to act contemptuously against that which was your parents’ reverence.

Manasseh next sinned in a great variety of ways, for, according to the third verse, he seemed eager to be meddling with all forms of idolatry. He was not satisfied with one false god, or one set of idolatrous rites, but he reared up altars for Baalim and made groves and worshipped the host of Heaven. Nor yet content with all this, he adored Moloch and passed his children through the fire in the valley of the Son of Hinnom. He heaped up vile idolatries, not only sending far and wide to find out what were the gods of the different nations, but reviving the old cast-off gods of the Canaanites whom God had destroyed for their crimes! One form of insult to the living God was not enough for him—he heaped together his rebellions! There are men to whom to sin with one hand is not sufficient—they must transgress with greediness. One vice does not content them—they cannot be satisfied to go to Hell except with four steeds to their chariot and these they drive like Jehu the Furious! They never seem content, except with all their might they are fighting against the Lord and pulling down His wrath upon their heads!

These sins of Manasseh were not merely various, but *some of them were peculiarly foul*. The worship of Baalim and Ashtaroth was associated with such abominations that one is sorry even to have known of them, and especially the *ashera*, or symbols, wrongly translated “groves,” were so lascivious that I shall not so much as hint at what they were. Such worship must have unutterably defiled the mind of the worshipper and rendered him fit for vice of the most degrading kind! Think of obscenity made into a religion—vice an ingredient of adoration. O God! That ever man should have come down to this! Worse, still, that a king of Judah and a son of Hezekiah should patronize and ordain orgies which polluted the mind beyond conception! It sufficed not that he adored the sun when it shined, and kissed his hand to the moon walking in her brightness—the sin of star worship was not enough—but he must set up graven images and worship the idols of the Philistines, of Egypt, Assyria and Tyre! The calves of Bethel did not sufficiently provoke the Lord, but the idols of Baal and the lewdness of Ashtaroth must defile the whole land from end to end! Instead of the holy worship of Jehovah, the worship of devils was ordained by the king’s authority and Judah’s land became a den of abominations!

But Manasseh went to the utmost in evil and *added gross impudence and insult to his crimes*, so as to defy the Lord to His face, for, “he built altars in the House of the Lord, whereof the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever. And he built altars for all the host of Heaven in the two courts of the House of the Lord.” Oh, the infinite patience of the Most High, that He bore with such a daring insult as this! There were all the hills of Judah and the valleys thereof. Were they not enough for Manasseh’s idols and their altars? Must the hill of Zion also be profaned? Was there no spot but that which the Lord had set apart for Himself and of which it had been said, “The Lord is there”? Must Jehovah’s own courts be desecrated with the image of jealousy? Must the altars to the hosts of Heaven be set up where only the Lord of Hosts should have been adored? Yet Manasseh dared to do this, carrying rebellion against the Lord to its utmost extent!

Another proof of his inveterate sinfulness is found *in his treatment of his children*. He was not satisfied with sinning in his own person—his offspring must be handed over to the Evil One. “He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the Son of Hinnom.” Moloch is said to have been represented by a great hollow image made of brass, which was heated red hot and filled with fire till the flames came pouring forth from its mouth. Into the red-hot arms of this image some parents placed their babes, so that they were consumed alive—but others, like Manasseh, passed their children between those burning arms, so that they received “a baptism of fire.”

Nor is this all. *Manasseh went to extremes in personal, deliberate sin*, for it is said of him that for himself and on his own account, he “observed times”—that is, “lucky” and, “unlucky” days and he “used enchant-

ments"—those different devices by which men think they can produce certain events or foretell them. "And he used witchcraft and dealt with a familiar spirit and with wizards." It matters nothing whether these things were deceits by which he was duped, or were real dealings with demons—the sin is the same because in the man's intent, forbidden communion was carried on, such communion as is abominable in the sight of the Most High, and to be abhorred by every Believer! Whether true or pretended, attempts at necromancy, witchcraft and communion with spirits mark a mind far gone astray from God. Remember that such persons cannot enter Heaven, for, "without are dogs and sorcerers," and they are placed with whoremongers and liars who are declared to be shut out of the Holy City. Manasseh was eager and greedy in these detestable pursuits—he could never have enough of them. Witches, wizards, familiar spirits, enchantments, all sorts of cheats he trusted in—he who would not believe in God could freely yield his faith to lying wonders! How sad to see a mind capable of thought and reason bowed down at the feet of witches and mutterers of spells! How horrible to see a man making a league with death and a covenant with Hell! Still, if a man should have gone this length, he may yet be recovered out of the snare of the devil by Almighty Grace! Friend, if you have even wandered into this infamous wickedness, you need not despair, for Jesus lives to save the vilest of the vile!

The picture is awful enough already, surely, you say. Yes, but we have other strokes to add, for Manasseh *repeated these sins and exaggerated them each time*. After one forbidden idol had been enshrined, he set up another yet more foul! And after building altars in the courts of the Temple, he ventured further and, "set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the House of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever." Thus he piled up his transgressions and multiplied his provocations.

All this while *he was leading thousands with him in his desperate course*—both by his influence and authority he was compelling the nation to blaspheme! The whole land followed its king, save only a remnant cording to the election of Divine Grace—and these bore all the fury of Manasseh's wrath. The nation was prone to fall into idolatry and willingly went with the court! When the king bade them worship Baalim, they joyfully replied, "So would we have it!" And even when the most polluted emblems were set up for worship, the mass of the people greedily went after the abominations! A few wept and sighed in secret—and spoke often, one to another—but they had no power to alter the sad state of things, for the king was too strong for them. How sad to see a royal personage become a ringleader of iniquity! For princely example is infectious and its power for evil is boundless. Do I speak to one whose life leads others astray? Are you a man of mark? Are you placed in a position of in-

fluence? Are you a parent with children about you who will inevitably copy you? Are you the foreman in the workshop, or the head of a club, so that what you say and do becomes law to feebler minds than your own? Ah, you have the power to sin a hundred times at once, for you make others commit the sin in which you indulge! Your sin brings forth many at a birth and as by means of mirrors the image of an object can be multiplied, so is your sin reflected in scores of others! The voice of your evil life is repeated by a thousand echoes! Think of this and beware! Why should you destroy others as well as yourself? Do not be guilty of the blood of your neighbors! Do not murder your own children's souls! Consent not to be a jackal for the lion of the Pit, or a net in the devil's hand, for if you are such, your sin is infinite!

Nor was this all, for though it is not recorded in the Chronicles, yet you will find in the Second Book of Kings, at the 21st Chapter, that *he persecuted the people of God very furiously*. "Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end of it to another." He was so zealous in carrying out his idolatries that he could not endure the sight of a man who would not bow before his images! He hated those ancient Nonconformists, those Protestants, those separatists, those Puritans—and he made laws to put them down so that the worshippers of Jehovah were "stoned and were sawn asunder, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented." We cannot vouch for the tradition that the Prophet Isaiah was put to death by Manasseh by being sawn in sunder, but terrible as is the legend, it is not at all improbable. Manasseh had his Bartholomew Massacre and his unholy Inquisition! He was a bloody persecutor during much of his long life and left marks of his reign of terror all over the land. Persecution is one of the most heinous of sins and greatly provokes the Most High, for the Lord has said concerning His people, "He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." Manasseh did, as it were, thrust his finger into the eye of God! This was a Heaven-provoking crime! In these days the law does not allow the shedding of innocent blood, but there are people in the world who go as far as they can in persecution. There are modes of torture which can be used against a believing wife, such as will hardly be imagined! Children can be provoked and grievously afflicted by un-Christian parents. "Trials of cruel mocking," are mentioned by the Apostle—and they are very cruel and trying, too. We have known persons use towards brothers and sisters, and even towards children, such threats and modes of abuse and such taunts and jeers, that they have made their lives bitter as with heavy bondage! This is against God a very high offense. You cannot anger a man more than by ill-using his little ones! Touch his children and you bring the color into his face, directly, and the man's temper is up—and he who insults, and mocks and grieves God's children will one day find that the Lord will avenge His own elect though He bears long with them!

Only one more touch to finish this dark picture—was there ever a blacker?—and it is this which is contained in the tenth verse—"And the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people, but they would not listen." *Manasseh refused warning.* He did not sin without being rebuked. God did try the bit and bridle upon him, but they were of no use, for this wild horse took the bit between his teeth and dashed on in utter madness! He could not, he would not, bow before the loving admonition of the Most High! This makes sin to be exceedingly sinful, for, "He that being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Without rebuke, a man's sin may be far less than it must be after the rejection of admonitions from the mouth of God! To stifle conscience and refuse loving warning is to incur fearful guilt.

Such was this Manasseh—the very chief of sinners! I feel certain that among those whom I address there is not a grosser sinner than he was. And I might almost say there never lived a worse! He has an evil eminence among the lovers of iniquity, *and yet he was saved by Divine Grace!* O you who hear these words or read them, never dare to doubt the possibility of your being forgiven! If such a wretch as Manasseh was brought to repentance, surely no one need despair! Now listen to what Almighty Grace, nevertheless, did for Manasseh, whom we will now think of as—

III. A REMARKABLE CONVERT.

His conversion began, or *was worked at its commencement, instrumentally, by his afflictions.* The king of Assyria came against him and he was unable to resist his assault. Sennacherib, a former king of Assyria, had invaded the land in the days of Hezekiah and the Lord had delivered His people, but there was no God to deliver Manasseh, and so the armies of Assyria overran the land and the royal idolater found his idols fail him. For fear of being captured in Jerusalem, he fled and concealed himself in a thorn brake, but was soon captured, or "taken among the thorns," and led in chains to Babylon. He seems to have been very severely handled by the king, who was, probably, Esarhaddon, king of united Assyria and Babylon, for he is spoken of as taken with hooks, such as large fish are taken with, or held by a ring such as is often passed through the noses of wild beasts. If this is only a figure, it represents Manasseh as regarded by the Assyrian king as an unmanageable beast to be subdued by rigor—even as a bull is managed by a ring in his nose. We are also told that he was loaded with double fetters of brass and was taken down to Babylon, to be kept in a close dungeon. The Assyrians were notoriously a fierce people and Manasseh, having provoked them, felt all the degradation, scorn and cruelty which anger could invent! He who had trusted idols was made a slave to an idolatrous people! He who had shed very much blood was now in daily jeopardy of the shedding of his own! He who had insulted the Lord must now be continually insulted himself. That which he had meted out was measured into his own bosom! He was the prodi-

gal in actual life, in a far country, where he gladly would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave unto him. While fast chained in prison, the iron entered into his soul and his thoughts troubled him. How vain, now, to cry to Baal or Ashtaroth! The stars that peered through the grated bars of his dungeon upbraided him for his foolish worship and the sun and moon took up the tale of rebuke. Familiar spirits were familiar no longer and magic, with its lying wonders, could not release him! No, nor the witches and wizards with their enchantments.

There he lies and fears that there he will lie and rot—but in his extremity, Infinite Mercy visits him and *his soul finds vent for its misery in prayer*. "He sought the Lord God of his fathers." I admire the historian's words, he had dishonored his father as well as his God, but now he thinks of his godly ancestors and their holy faith. Surely his desire to return to his father's faith bore some likeness to that more spiritual resolve of the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my father." It has often happened that men have been, by Divine Grace, the more readily led to God because He was their father's or their mother's God. Human love is thus dissolved in the nobler passion. Manasseh thinks, meditates, considers, reviews his life and loathes himself! He remembers how his father prospered by Jehovah's aid and, perhaps, also remembers the marvelous story of how Jehovah heard his father's prayer when he was near to die and raised him to life again. At any rate, in the dungeon he imitated his father, turned his face to the wall and wept sorely and prayed. "If," he said, "God saved my father's life, perhaps He may forgive my sin and bring me out of this horrible captivity." Thus hopefully he cried unto the Lord! O Friend, will you not also cry unto the God whom you have offended? Will you not say, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Try, I beseech you, the power of prayer!

But notice what went with his prayer, for, O Sinner, if you would have mercy of God, it must go with your—"he humbled himself greatly." Ah, he had been a great man before—he was high and mighty Manasseh who would have his own way and dared defy the Lord to His face! But now he sings another song. He lies low as a penitent and begs as a sinner! How would he now use the language of his forefather David—"Have mercy upon me, O God, and blot out my transgressions." There is in the Apocrypha a book entitled "The Prayer of Manasses," which was probably composed to gratify the curiosity which would like to know how so great a transgressor prayed. Of course, it is spurious, but it contains some good and humble language almost meet for the lips of so great a penitent, though far more coherent and oratorical than his words are likely to have been. What a broken prayer Manasseh's must have been! And what groans, and sobs, and sighs were heard and seen by the great Father of Spirits, as His erring child sought His face in the gloomy cells of Babylon! Let such be your frame of mind, O Sinner. Be ashamed of your sin and

folly! Confess it with mourning and abhor yourself on account of it. May the Holy Spirit bring you to this mind!

Brothers and Sisters, *the Lord heard Manasseh!* Glory be to Infinite Grace, the Lord heard him! Blood-stained hands were lifted to Heaven, and yet the Lord accepted the prayer. A heart that had been the palace of Satan! A heart which had conceived mischief and brought forth cruelty! A proud rebellious heart humbled itself before God and the Lord pardoned and smiled upon the penitent and, as a testimony of His Infinite Mercy, He moved the king of Assyria to take Manasseh out of prison and restore him to his throne! The Lord does great marvels and shows great mercy unto the very chief of sinners! O that this might persuade some to test and try this gracious God! Manasseh had not such a clear revelation as you have—you have heard of God in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself—not imputing their trespasses unto them. Let the wounds of Jesus encourage you! Let His intercession for sinners cheer you! God is ready to pardon, and His heart yearn towards you. Come even now and seek His face, you vilest among men!

Now, can you picture Manasseh going back from Babylon attended by a cohort of Assyrian soldiers? The poor Believers in Jerusalem have had a little respite while he has been in durance. Perhaps they even ventured to the Temple and restored the worship of Jehovah. At any rate, they crept out of the holes and corners in which they had laid hid and breathed more freely. But now it is rumored that the persecuting king is coming back—that the hunter of the souls of men is again abroad! What dread seized the minds of the timid among the godly and how earnestly the brave-spirited steeled their hearts for the conflict! More stoning, more sawing asunder! Can it be that these horrors are to be renewed? The righteous meet and sorrowfully plead with God that He would not permit the light to be quite quenched, nor give over His people like sheep to the slaughter. What a day of foreboding it must have been when the king came through the city gates! But perhaps some of them watched him—and when he passed by a shrine of Baal they noticed that he did not bow! The image of Ashtaroth stood in the high place, but they observed that he turned away his head as though he would not look in that direction! And what was their joy when they afterwards read his proclamation that from henceforth, Judah should worship Jehovah alone! What hanging down of the heads for the ritualistic, idolatrous party—but what joy among the evangelicals that the king, himself, had come over to their side—for now the Truth of God and the true-hearted would have the upper hand! What triumph was felt by the saints when the king sent the cleansers to the Temple to pull down the carved image! Then went up their hymns and they blessed the Lord with all their hearts, singing, "In Judah is God known! His name is great in Israel! There breaks He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." O that such songs might be sung in the Church of Christ because of some of you!

Manasseh also *did his best to undo what he had done*, and to restore what he had damaged, for those who are really converted show it practically. Restitution must be made for wrongs done, or repentance is a sham! All the evil we have done we must labor to remedy, or our penitence is only skin deep. That conversion which does not convert or turn the life is no conversion at all. One or two things remain to be said by way of practical address. First, dear Friends, *adore Divine Grace*. Never limit its power, but believe it able to convert the most abandoned! Believe that it can save you! Since our Lord Jesus always lives to intercede for those who come unto God by Him, He is able also to save them unto the uttermost! You cannot have too large ideas of Divine Grace, for where sin abounds, Grace does much more abound!

But secondly, *never turn it into an excuse for continuing in sin*, for this case of Manasseh, with all its mercy, is still a sad one. Though we have seen how Grace gave it a good ending, yet, take it for all-in-all, it is a sad case and as a life, Manasseh’s was wasted, misspent and full of wretchedness. Although he sought to mend matters, he could not fully undo what he had done. The people were nothing like as eager to follow the right as they were the wrong—and after many years of royal patronage of idolatry it was not easy for the masses to turn around, all of a sudden, and so the people sacrificed on their high places, though only to Jehovah, and their hearts still went after their idols.

The last word is, *seek for mercy, all of you*. Do not neglect it because of its greatness, but rather hasten to receive it! Since we all need more mercy than we imagine, let us cry for it at once in hearty earnest! Let us come to the fountain which is opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and wash therein! Let us, by faith in Jesus’ blood, wash and be clean! The Lord make us to do so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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

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

MANASSEH

NO. 105

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 30, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.”
2 Chronicles 33:13.***

MANASSEH is one of the most remarkable characters whose history is written in the sacred pages. We are accustomed to mention his name in the list of those who greatly sinned and yet found great mercy. Side by side with Saul of Tarsus, with that great sinner who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head and with the thief who died upon the cross—a forgiven sinner at the eleventh hour—we can write the name of Manasseh, who “shed innocent blood very much.” But notwithstanding that, he was forgiven and pardoned, finding mercy through the blood of a Savior who had not then died, but whom God foresaw would die and the merits of whose Sacrifice He therefore imputed to so great a transgressor as Manasseh!

Without preface we shall enter on the history of Manasseh this morning and consider him in a three-fold light—first, *as a sinner*, then *as an unbeliever* and, thirdly, *as a convert*. It may be there shall be some Manasseh within these walls, now, and if in describing the case of this ancient king of Israel, I shall in some degree describe him, I trust he will take to himself the same consoling Truths which were the means of the comfort of Manasseh when in the dungeon of repentance.

I. First, then, we shall consider MANASSEH IN HIS SIN.

1. And we note, first, that he belonged to that class of sinners who stand first in the phalanx of evil—namely, those *who sin against great light, against a pious education and early training*. Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, a man who had some faults but of whom it is said, nevertheless, “He did right in the sight of the Lord.” To a great degree he walked before God with a perfect heart, even as did David, his father. We cannot suppose that he neglected the education of his son, Manasseh. He was the son of his old age. You will remember that at a time of heavy sickness, God promised Hezekiah that he would have his life prolonged 15 years. Three years after that event, Manasseh was born and he was, therefore, only 12 years old when his father died. Still, he was old enough to remember the pious prayer of a father and a mother and had arrived at sufficient maturity to understand right from wrong and to have received those early impressions which we believe are, in most cases, eminently useful for adult life. And yet Manasseh pulled down what his

father had built up and built up the idol temples which his father had pulled down! Now, it is a notorious fact that men who do go wrong after a good training are the worst men in the world. You may not know, but it is a fact, that the late lamented murder of Williams at Erromanga was brought about by the evil doings of a trader who had gone to the island and who was the son of a missionary! He had become reckless in his habits and treated the islanders with such barbarity and cruelty that they revenged his conduct upon the next white man who put his foot on their shore—and the beloved Williams, one of the last of the martyrs, died a victim of the guilt of those who had gone before him. The worst of men are those who, having much of the Light of God, still run astray. You shall find among the greatest champions of the camp of Hell men who were brought up and educated in our very ranks! It is not necessary that I should mention names. But any of you that are acquainted with those who are the leaders of infidelity at the present time will, at once, recognize the fact. And such men actually make the very worst of infidels—while the best of Christians often come from the very worst of sinners. Our John Bunyans have come from the pothouse and the taproom, from the bowling alley, or places lower in the scale. Our best of men have come from the very worst of places and have been the best adapted to reclaim sinners because they, themselves, had stepped into the kennel and had, nevertheless, been washed in a Savior's cleansing blood. And so it is true that the worst of the enemies of Christ are those who are nourished in our midst and, like the viper of old, which the husbandman nursed in his bosom, turned round to sting the bosom which has nurtured them! Such an one was Manasseh.

2. In the next place, *Manasseh, as a sinner, was a very bold one.* He was one of those men who does not sin covertly, but who, when they transgress, do not seem to be at all ashamed. They are born with brazen foreheads and lift their faces to Heaven with insolence and impudence. He was a man who, if he would set up an idol, as you would see by reading this Chapter, did not set it up in an obscure part of the land, but put it in the very Temple of God! And when he would desecrate the name of the Most High, he did not in private go to his chapel, where he might worship some evil deity, but he put the deity into the very Temple, itself, as if to insult God to His very face! He was a desperado in sin and went to the utmost limit of it, being very bold and desperately set on mischief! Now, whether it is for right or wrong, boldness is always sure to win the day. Give me a coward—you give me nothing! Give me a bold man and you give me one that can do something—whether for Christ's cause or for the devil's! Manasseh was a man of this kind. If he cursed God, it was with a loud voice—it was not in a hole or corner, but upon his throne that he issued proclamations against the Most High—and in the most daring manner, insulted the Lord God of Israel! And yet, dear Friends, this man was saved, notwithstanding all this! This greatest sinner, this

man who had trampled on his father's prayers, who had wiped from his brow the tears which had been shed there by an anxious parent, who had stifled the convictions of his conscience and had gone to an extremity of guilt, in bold, open and desperate sin—yet this man was at last, by Divine Grace, humbled and brought on his knees to acknowledge that God was God, alone! Let no man, therefore, despair of his fellow! I never do, since I think and hope that God has saved me. I am persuaded that, live as long as I may, I shall never see the individual of whom I can say, "That man is a hopeless case." I may, perhaps, meet with the person who has been so exhorted and so warned and has so put off all the sweet wooing of his conscience that he has become seared and hardened and, consequently, *apparently* hopeless. But I shall never meet a man who has sinned so desperately that I can say of him, he never can be saved! Ah, no—that arm of mercy which was long enough to save me, is long enough to save you! And if He could redeem you from your transgression, assuredly there are none sunk lower than you were and, therefore, you may believe that His arm of mercy can reach them! Above all, let no man despair of himself. While there is life, there is hope! Give not up yourselves unto Satan's arms! He tells you that your death warrant is sealed, that your doom is cast and that you never can be saved. Tell him to his face that he is a liar, for Jesus Christ, "is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing that He ever lives to make intercession for them."

3. Again, Manasseh was a sinner of that peculiar caste which we suspect is not to be found very frequently. He was one of those who *had the power of leading others*, to a very large extent, astray from the Truth and religion of God. He was a king and had, therefore, great influence—what he commanded was done! Among the ranks of idolaters, Manasseh stood first—and it was the song and glory of the false priests that the king of Judah was on the side of the gods of the heathen! He was the leader—the first man in the battle! When the troops of the ungodly went to war against the God of the whole earth, Manasseh led the vanguard and cheered them on! He was their great Goliath, challenging all the armies of the living God. Many among the wicked stood back and feared the conflict. But he never feared. "He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast." And therefore he was bold and arrogant in leading others astray. There are some such still alive—men not content with treading the broad road themselves, but seeking to entice others into it. And oh, how active they are in their efforts! They will go from house to house and distribute those publications which are impure and polluting. They will stand in our streets and endeavor to draw around them the young—yes, men and women—just fresh come from the House of God, or going to God's sanctuary—to tell them that dreary story that there is no God, or the dismal lie that there is no future but that we must all die like dogs and suffer annihilation! There are some such who never seem to be hap-

py unless they are leading others astray. It is not enough for them to go alone against God, but they must sin in company! Like the woman in the Proverbs, they hunt for precious life and like hounds thirsting for blood, they are seeking after men to destroy! Society is now like Prometheus. It is, to a great extent, bound hand and foot by the very customs that surround us—and like Prometheus, we have upon us the winged hound of Hell perpetually tapping at our heart and swallowing the life-blood of our spirit! I mean we have that accursed infidelity which seeks to lead men from God and drive them from their Maker. But, nevertheless, leaders among them have yet been saved. Manasseh, the leader of those who hated God, was yet humbled and made to love the Most High!

Do you ask me whether such cases ever occur now? I answer, yes they do—too rarely, but yet they do happen. Yesterday I received something which cheered my heart very much and made me bless my God, that notwithstanding all opposition He had still made me of some little use in the world. I received a long letter from a certain city, from one who has been one of the leaders of the secular society in that place. The writer says, “I purchased one of the pamphlets entitled ‘Who Is This Spurgeon?’ and also your portrait, (or a portrait sold as yours) for 3d. I brought these home and exhibited them in my shop window. I was induced to do so from a feeling of derisive pleasure. The title of the pamphlet is, naturally, suggestive of caricature and it was especially to incite that impression that I attached it to your portrait and placed it in my window. But I also had another object in view. I thought by its attraction, to improve my trade. I am not at all in the book or paper business, which rendered its exposure and my motive the more conspicuous. I have taken it down, now—*I am taken down, too*. I had bought one of your sermons of an infidel a day or two previous. In that sermon I read these words—‘They go on, that step is safe—they take it. The next is safe—they take it, their foot hangs over a gulf of darkness.’ I read on, but the word, darkness, staggered me! It was all dark with me. True, the way has been safe, so far, but I am lost in bewilderment. No, no, no, I will not risk it! I left the apartment in which I had been musing and as I did so, the three words, ‘Who can tell?’ seemed to be whispered at my heart. I determined not to let another Sunday pass without visiting a place of worship. How soon my soul might be required of me I knew not, but I felt that it would be mean, base, cowardly, not to give it a chance. Yes, my associates may laugh, scoff, deride, call me coward, turncoat, I will do an act of justice to my soul. I went to Chapel. I was just stupefied with awe. What could I want there? The doorkeeper opened his eyes wider and involuntarily demanded, ‘It’s Mr. _____, isn’t it?’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘it is.’ He conducted me to a seat and afterwards brought me a hymnbook. I was fit to burst with anguish. ‘Now’, I thought, ‘I am here. If it is the House of God, Heaven grant me an audience and I will make a full surrender! O God, show me some token by which I may know that You *are* and that You will in no wise

cast out the vile deserter who has ventured to seek Your face and your pardoning mercy.' I opened the hymnbook to divert my mind from feelings that were rending me and the first words that caught my eyes were—

***'Dark, dark indeed the grave would be
Had we no Light, O God, from Thee.'***

After giving some things which he looks upon as evidences that he is a true convert of religion, he closes up by saying, "O Sir, tell this to the poor wretch whose pride, like mine, has made him in league with Hell! Tell it to the hesitating and to the timid! Tell it to the cooling Christian, that God is a very present help to all that are in need! Think of the poor sinner who may never look upon you in this world, but who will live to bless and pray for you, here, and long to meet you in the world exempt from sinful doubts, from human pride and backsliding hearts." Ah, he need not ask *my* forgiveness! I am happy, too happy, in the hope of calling him, "Brother," in the Christian Church! This letter is from a place many miles from this city and from a man who had no small standing among the ranks of those who hate Christ. Ah, there have been Manassehs saved, and there shall be more yet! There have been men who hated God, who have leaped for joy and said—

***'I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven!
I'm a miracle of Grace,'***

and have kissed the very feet which once they scorned and scoffed and could not bear to hear the mention of!

There is one fact concerning Manasseh which stamps him as being a very prince of sinners, namely this—"He caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom," and dedicated his sons unto Tophet. This was a dreadful sin, for though Manasseh repented, we find that his son, Amon, followed in the steps of his father in his wickedness but not in his righteousness. Listen! "Amon was two-and-twenty years old when he began to reign and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh, his father, had made and served them and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh, his father, had humbled himself. But Amon trespassed more and more." Children will imitate their fathers in their vices, seldom in their repentance. If parents sin, their children will follow them, without much doubt. But when they repent and turn to God, it is not so easy to lead a child back in the way which it has once forsaken. Are there any here, who, like that ancient Carthaginian, have dedicated their sons to the opposition of their enemy? You remember one who dedicated his son, Hannibal, from his very birth, to be the everlasting enemy of the Romans. There may be such a man, here, who has dedicated his offspring to Satan, to be the everlasting enemy of Christ's Gospel and is trying to train up and tutor him in a way which is contrary to

the fear of the Lord. Is such a man hopeless? His sin is dreadful, his state is dreary—his sin without repentance will assuredly damn him! But AS long as he is here, we will still preach repentance to him, knowing that Manasseh was brought to know God and was forgiven all his manifold sins.

II. The second aspect in which we are to regard Manasseh is as an UNBELIEVER—for it appears that Manasseh did not believe that Jehovah, alone, was God. He was, therefore, a believer in false gods, but an unbeliever, so far as the Truth of God is concerned. Now, does it not strike you at the outset, that while Manasseh was an unbeliever in the Truth, he must have been a very credulous person to believe in all the imaginary deities of the heathen? In fact, the most credulous persons in the world are unbelievers! It takes ten thousand times more faith to be an unbeliever than to be a believer in Revelation! One man comes to me and tells me I am credulous because I believe in a great First Cause who created the heavens and the earth and that God became Man and died for sin. I tell him I may be and, no doubt, am very credulous, as he conceives credulity. But I conceive that which I believe is in perfect consistency with my reason and I, therefore, receive it. “But,” he says, “I am not credulous—not at all.” Sir, I would like to ask you one thing. You do not believe the world was created by God. “No.” You must be amazingly credulous, then, I am sure! Do you think this Bible exists without being made? If you should say I am credulous because I believe it had a printer and a binder, I would say you were infinitely more credulous, if you assured me that it was made at all! And should you begin to tell me one of your theories about Creation—that atoms floated through space and came to a certain shape—I would resign the palm of credulity to you! You believe, perhaps, moreover, that man came to be in this world through the improvement of certain creatures. I have read that you say that there were certain monads—that these monads improved themselves until they came to be small animalcule—that afterwards, they grew into fishes—that these fishes wanted to fly—and then wings grew—that, by-and-by, they wanted to crawl and then legs came and they became lizards and by many steps they then became monkeys and then the monkeys became men and you believe yourself to be cousin-germane to an orangutan! Now, I may be very credulous, but really not so credulous as you are! I may believe very strange things. I may believe that with the jawbone of an ass, Samson slew a thousand men. I may believe that the earth was drowned with water and many other strange things, as you call them, but as for your creed, your non-creed, “’tis strange, ’tis passing strange, ’tis amazing,” and it as much outstrips mine, in credulity, if I am credulous, as an ocean outstrips a drop! It requires the hardest faith in the world to deny the Scriptures, because the man, in his secret heart, knows they are true. Go where he will, something whispers to him, “You may be wrong—perhaps you are.” And it is as much as he can do, to say,

“Lie down, conscience! Down with you! I must not let you speak, or I could not deliver my lecture tomorrow, I could not go among my friends, I could not go to such-and-such a club, for I cannot afford to keep a conscience, if I cannot afford to keep a God.”

And now let me tell you what I conceive to be the reasons why Manasseh was an unbeliever. In the first place, I conceive that *the unlimited power* which Manasseh possessed had a very great tendency to make him a disbeliever in God. I would not wonder if an autocrat—a man with absolute dominion—should deny God! I would think it only natural. You remember that memorable speech of Napoleon’s? He was told that man proposed, but that God disposed. “Ah,” said Napoleon, “I propose and dispose, too.” And therein he arrogated himself the very supremacy of God! We do not wonder at it, because his victories had so speedily succeeded each other, his prowess had been so complete, his fame so great and his power over his subjects so absolute. Power, always, I believe, except in the heart which is rightly governed by Divine Grace, has a tendency to lead us to deny God. It is that noble intellect of such-and-such a man which has led him into discussion. He has twice, thrice, four, five, six, seven times come off more than conqueror in the field of controversy! He looks around and says, “I am, there is none beside me. Let me take up whatever I please, I can defend it. There is no man who can stand against the blade of my intellect—I can give him such a home thrust as will assuredly overcome him.” And then, like Dr. Johnson, who often took up the side of the question he did not believe, just because he liked to get a victory that was difficult to win—so do these men espouse what they believe to be wrong, because they conceive it gives them the finest opportunity of displaying their abilities. “Let me,” says some mighty intellect, “fight with a Christian. I shall have hard enough work to prove my thesis. I know I shall have a great difficulty to undermine the bastions of truth which he opposes to bear against me, but so much the better! It were worthwhile to be conquered by so stout an opposition and if I can overcome my antagonist, if I can prove myself to have more logic than he has, then I can say, ‘tis glorious—‘tis glorious to have fought against an opponent with so much on his side and yet to have come off more than conqueror!” I do believe the best man in the world is very hard to be trusted with power. He will, unless Grace keeps him, make a wrong use of it before long. Hence it is that the most influential of God’s servants are almost invariably the most tried ones, because our heavenly Father knows that if it were not for great trials and afflictions, we would begin to set ourselves up against Him and arrogate to ourselves a glory which we had no right to claim.

But another reason why Manasseh was an unbeliever, I take it, *was because he was proud*. Pride lies at the root of infidelity. Pride is the very germ of opposition to God. The man says, “Why should I believe?” The Sunday school child reads his Bible and says it is true. Am I, a man of

intellect, to sit side by side with him and receive a thing as true simply at the dictum of God's Word? No, I will not! I will find it out for myself and I will not believe simply because it is revealed to me, for that were to make myself a child." And when he turns to the page of Revelation and reads thus, "except you be converted and become as little children, you can in nowise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," he says, "Pshaw! I shall not be converted, then! I am not going to be a child. I am a man and a man I will be and I would rather be a lost man than a saved child! What? Am I to surrender my judgment and sit down tacitly to believe in God's Word?" "Yes," says God's Word, "you are. You are to become as a child and meekly to receive My Word." "Then," he says in his arrogance and pride, "I will not," and, like Satan, he declares it were better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven—and he goes away an unbeliever—because to believe is too humbling a thing.

But perhaps the most potent reason for Manasseh's unbelief lies here—*he loved sin too well*. When Manasseh built the altars for his false gods, he could sin easily and keep his conscience. He felt Jehovah's Laws so stringent that if he once believed in the One God, he could not sin as he did. He read it thus—"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. You shall not kill. You shall not steal," and so on. Manasseh wanted to do all these things and, therefore, he would not believe because he could not believe and keep his sin. The very reason why we have much unbelief is because we have much love of sin! Men will have no God because God interferes with their lusts! They could not go on in their sins if they once believed there was an Everlasting God above them! Or *professed* to believe it, for all do believe it, whether they say so or not. And because the thought of God checks them in their impiety and their lust, therefore they cry out, "There is no God," and say it with their lips as well as in their hearts. I believe it was this that led Manasseh to persecute the saints of God—for among his sins it is written, "he shed innocent blood very much." It is a tradition among the Jews that the Prophet Isaiah was sawn in two by Manasseh on account of a rebuke which he gave him for his sin. Isaiah was not very timid and he told the king of his lusts and, therefore, placing him between two planks, he cut him in two from head to foot. It is just the reason why men hate God and hate His servants, because the Truth is too hot for them. Send you a preacher who would not tell you of your sins and you would hear him peaceably. But when the Gospel comes with power, then it is that men cannot bear it! When it trenches upon that pleasure, that sin, or that lust—then they will not believe it! You would believe the Gospel if you could believe it and live in your sins, too. Oh, how many a drunken reprobate would be a Christian if he might be a drunk and a Christian, too! How many a wicked wretch would turn Believer if he might believe and yet go on in his sins! But because faith in the Everlasting God can never stand side by side with sin and because the Gospel cries, "Down with it! Down with it! Down with

your sin,” therefore it is that men turn round and say, “Down with the Gospel!” It is too hot for you, O you sinful generation! Therefore you turn aside from it because it will not tolerate your lusts, nor indulge your iniquity.

III. We look, then, at Manasseh as an unbeliever. And now we have our last and most pleasing task of looking at Manasseh as a convert. Hear it, O heavens and listen, O earth! The Lord God has said it! Manasseh shall be saved! He on his throne of cruelty has just appended his name to another murderous edict against the saints of God, yet he shall be humbled—he shall ask for mercy and shall be saved! Manasseh hears the decree of God—he laughs. “What? I play the hypocrite and bend my knee? Never! It is not possible!” And when the godly hear of it, they all say, “It is not possible! What? Saul among the Prophets? Manasseh regenerated? Manasseh made to bow before the most High? The thing is impossible.” Ah, it is impossible with *man*, but it is possible with God! God knows how to do it. The enemy is at the gates of the city. A hostile king has just besieged the walls of Jerusalem. Manasseh flees from his palace and hides himself among the thorns. He is taken, carried captive to Babylon and shut up in prison. And now we see what God can do. The proud king is proud no longer, for he has lost his power. The mighty man is mighty no more, for his might is taken from him. And now in a low dungeon, listen to him! He is no more the blasphemer, no more the hater of God, but see him, cold, on the floor! Manasseh bows his knees and with the tears rolling down his cheeks, he cries, “O God! My father’s God! An outcast comes to You. A Hell-hound, stained with blood, throws himself at Your feet. I, a very demon, full of filthiness, now prostrate myself before You!” Hear it, you heavens! Listen yet again! Look, from the skies the angel flies with Mercy in his hand. Ah, where speeds he? It is to the dungeon of Babylon! The proud king is on his knees and Mercy comes and whispers in his ear—“Hope!” Manasseh starts from his knees and cries, “Is there hope?” And down he falls again! Once more he pleads and Mercy whispers that sweet promise, uttered once by the murdered Isaiah—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake and will not remember your sins.” Oh, do you see him? His very heart is running over in his eyes! Oh, how he weeps for joy and yet for sorrow that he ever could have sinned against a God so kind! A moment more, and the dungeon is opened. The king of Babylon, moved by God, bids him go free and Manasseh returns to his kingdom and throne, a happier and a better man than he had ever been before! I think I see him coming into Jerusalem. There are his statesmen and favorites. They welcome him. “Come in, Manasseh! The bowl shall be filled and we will have a merry night, tonight—we will bow before the shrine of Ashtaroth and thank her that she has set you at liberty! Lo, the horses of the sun are ready—come and pay your devotions to him that shines on the earth and leads the host of Heaven!” I think I see their astonishment when he

cries, "Stand back! Stand back! You are my friends no longer, until you become God's friends! I have candled you on my knees and as vipers you have stung me with the poison of asps! I made you my friends and you have led me down to the gulf of Hell! But now I know it—stand back till you are better men and I will find others to be my courtiers." And there the poor saints, hidden in the back streets of the city, so frightened because the king has come back, are holding meetings of solemn prayer, crying unto God that no more murderous, persecuting edicts might go forth! And lo, a messenger comes and says, "The king is returned." And while they are looking at him, wondering what the messenger is about to say, he adds, "He has returned, not Manasseh as he went, but as a very angel! I saw him, with his own hands dash Ashtaroth in pieces! I heard him cry, 'The horses of the sun shall be hanged'—sweep out the House of God—we will hold a Passover there—the morning and evening lamb shall again burn on Jehovah's altars, for He is God, and beside Him there is none else!"

Oh, Can you conceive the joy of Believers on that auspicious day? Can you think how they went up to God's House with joy and thanksgiving? And on the next Sabbath they sung as they had never sung before, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation," while they remembered that he who had persecuted the saints of God aforetime, now defended that very Truth which once he abhorred! There was joy on earth, yes, and there was joy in Heaven, too! The bells of Heaven rang merry peals the day Manasseh prayed! The angels of Heaven flapped their wings with double willingness the day Manasseh repented! Earth and Heaven were glad and even the Almighty on His Throne smiled gracious approbation while He again said, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name's sake and will not remember your sins."

And now, are you curious to know what were the bases of the faith of Manasseh—what were the rocks on which he built his trust in God? I think they were two. He believed in God, first, *because He had answered his prayer*. And secondly, *because He had forgiven his sin*. I have sometimes said, when I have become the prey of doubting thoughts, "Well, now, I dare not doubt whether there is a God, for I can look back in my diary and say on such a day in the depths of trouble, I bent my knees to God and before I had risen from my knees the answer was given me." And so can many of you say, too! Therefore, whatever others may say, you know there is a God because He answered your prayers. You have heard of that holy man, Mr. Muller, of Bristol. If you were to tell George Muller there was not a God, he would weep over you. "Not a God?" he would say, "Why, I have seen His hands. Where came those answers to my prayers?" Ah, Sirs, you may laugh at us for credulity. But there are hundreds, here, who could most solemnly assert that they have asked of God for many matters and that God has not failed them, but granted

their requests! This was one reason why Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God!

The other reason was that *Manasseh had a sense of pardoned sin*. Ah, that is a delightful proof of the existence of a God! Here comes a poor miserable wretch. His knees are knocking together—his heart is sinking within him—he is giving himself up to despair. “Bring the physicians to him.” they cry, “we fear his mind is infirm. We believe he will, at last, have to be taken to some lunatic asylum.” They apply their remedies, but he is none the better, but rather grows worse. All of a sudden this poor creature, afflicted with a sense of sin, groaning on account of guilt, is brought within the sound of the Sacred Word. He hears it—it increases his misery! He hears it again—his pain becomes doubled—till, at last, everyone says his case is utterly hopeless! Suddenly, on a happy morning which God had ordained, the minister is led to some sweet passage. Perhaps it is this, “Come now and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The Spirit applies it and the poor man goes home light as air and says to his wife and children, “Come, rejoice with me!” “Why?” they ask. “Because,” he says, “my sins are forgiven!” “How do you know that?” “Oh,” he says, “I sense pardoning love within my heart, which all the doubters in the world could not deny—and if all the earth should rise up against me and say I would be condemned, I could say, ‘I know there is now no condemnation for me.’” Have you ever felt pardoning blood applied? You will never doubt God, I know, if you have! Why, dear Friends, if the poorest old woman in the world should be brought before an infidel of the wisest order, having a mind of the greatest caliber—and he should endeavor to pervert her—I think I see her smile at him and say, “My good man, it is of no use at all, for the Lord has appeared unto me of old, saying, ‘Yea I have loved you with an everlasting love,’ and so you may tell me what you please. I have had a sense of blood-bought pardon shed abroad in my heart and I know that He is God and you can never beat it out of me.” As good Watts says, when we have once such an assurance as that—

**“Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art—
I’d call them vanity and lies
And bind the Gospel to my heart!”**

Oh, If you have a sense that sin is forgiven, you can never doubt the existence of a God, for it will be said of you, “Then *he* knew that the Lord, He was God.”

And now I gather up my strength for just one moment, to speak to those of you who desire to know what you must do to be saved. My Hearer, no question can be more important than that! None is so requisite to ask. Alas, there are too many who never ask it, but who go sailing down to the gulf of black despair, listening to the siren song of procrastination

and delay. But if you have been brought to ask the question solemnly and seriously, “What must I do to be saved?” I am happy, thrice happy to be able to tell you God’s own Word—“He who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. He who believes not,” the Scripture says, “shall be damned.” “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” “But, Sir,” you say, “I have many good works and would trust on them.” If you do, you are a lost man! As old Matthew Wilks most quaintly said, once, speaking in his usual tone,—“You might as well try to sail to America in a paper boat as to go to Heaven by your own works. You will be swamped on the passage if you attempt it.” We cannot spin a robe that is long enough to cover us—we cannot make a righteousness that is good enough to satisfy God. If you would be saved, it must be through what Christ did and not what you did! You cannot be your own Savior. Christ must save you, if you are saved at all. How, then, can you be saved by Christ? Here is the plan of salvation. It is written—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Do you feel that you are a sinner? Then believe that Jesus Christ came to save you, for as sure as ever you feel you are a sinner, it is a fact that Christ died for you! And if He died for you, you shall not perish, for I cannot conceive that Christ would die in vain. If He did die for you, you shall most assuredly be pardoned and saved and shall one day sing in Heaven!

The only question is, Did He die for you? He most certainly did if you are a sinner! For it is written—I will repeat it again—“It is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners.” Poor Sinner, believe! My dear Friend, give me your hand! I wish I could put it inside Christ’s hand. Oh, embrace Him! Embrace Him, lest, God forbid, the clouds of night should come upon you and the sun should set before you have found Him! Oh, lay hold on Him, lest death and destruction should overtake you! Fly to this Mountain, lest you be consumed! And remember, once in Christ, you are safe beyond hazard—

***“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,
Nothing from His love can sever.”***

Oh, believe Him! Believe Him, my dear, dear Hearers, for Jesus’ sake. 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.**

PARDON FOR THE GREATEST GUILT NO. 2378

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 16, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 8, 1888.

“Manasseh did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. And when he was in affliction, he asked the LORD, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him, again, to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God.”
2 Chronicles 33:2, 12, 13.

THIS story of Manasseh is a very valuable one. I feel sure of this because you meet with it twice in the Word of God. It is a dreary story—a very dreary story—and the sad part of it is given twice in the Bible, while the consoling part of it is only recorded once. The Holy Spirit has some motive and reason for this, we may be sure. If you look in the Second Book of Kings, in the 21st Chapter, you will find, with some little alteration, the very same story that we have been reading, so far as the deplorable part of it is concerned. I take it that this is because God would have us pay great attention to this narrative. He would have us, again and again, dwell upon such wonders of Sovereign Grace as Manasseh presents to us.

Dear Friends, you have, here, the history of a great sinner, saved—I might say, a very *great* sinner, saved—and this is narrated in the Word of God that other great sinners, seeing it, may be encouraged to seek mercy as Manasseh sought and found it! No man, I trust, will be so base as to turn the mercy of God into an excuse for sin. He would deserve the deepest Hell, who would take encouragement to sin from the greatness of pardoning love! I will not suppose that anyone here is so driven by the devil as to do that, but I will trust that some great sinner, in whom despair has fixed itself, who has said, “Because there is no hope for me, therefore I will go farther into sin,” will be stopped in his evil course as he hears of the amazing, the immeasurable mercy of God to the greatest and most diabolical form of sinner!

This case of Manasseh is put in Scripture that it may breed its like, not in its sinfulness, but in its *faith*, its *prayer*, its *humiliation*, its *seeking* and its *finding* mercy. How many souls have been converted by reading the story of John Bunyan as he has written it in his, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners!* I doubt not that many a swearing tinker has said, “There is mercy for me as well as for John of Elstow.” Who, that has

read the first part of the, "*Life of John Newton*," has not felt encouraged to seek and find the Savior? The story of Colonel Gardiner and how the Lord met with him has been blessed to many a soldier, and he has had hope against hope that there may be mercy even for him in the depth of his sin.

I can well remember the time when I carefully treasured up every instance of God's mercy to sinners, as a man might store up pearls, for it seemed to me, then, that if I could find a soul like myself—equally sinful and equally convicted of sin, who, nevertheless, found mercy—then I, also, might find mercy, for I believed that God acted upon a certain style and scale and that He would do for me what He had done for others. "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways," said David, as much as if he had said, "If You save *me*, then I shall know that it is Your way to save great sinners, and I will go and tell other sinners what Your ways are, and my case shall be a proof of how You will act towards them."

I pray that while the door of Divine Mercy is open, some of you may come in. When the door of Noah's Ark was open, you know that it was wide enough to let in the elephant and, consequently, there was plenty of room for the mouse, and where the camel could enter, you may be sure that the sheep could go. If you should not feel that you have sinned after the terrible fashion of Manasseh, yet, if there is room in God's love for such as *he*, there is room enough for you! And the silver trumpet is ringing out the joyous invitation that we have often sung—

***"Come, and welcome, to the Savior,
He in mercy bids you come!
Come be happy in His favor,
Longer from Him do not roam.
Come, and welcome,
Come to Jesus, sinner, come!"***

The good Brother who prayed, just now, pleaded that God would give us an unusual blessing and your hearts, as well as mine, said, "Amen!" May it come to some of you who did *not* pray for it! May the Lord be found of them that sought Him not, according to His ancient promise! May He now say, "Behold Me, behold Me," to those who were not His people! And may some be found of Him who never could have been found of Him if His Grace were not most sovereign, most rich, and most free!

Now, in coming close to our subject, we are going to do two things. First, *let us examine the case before us*. And, secondly, *let us consider why there should be others like it*.

I. First, LET US EXAMINE THE CASE BEFORE US.

We begin by noticing that *Manasseh was the son of a good father*. I think that it always aggravates sin in any man when he comes of a holy stock. You who were nursed amid a godly mother's prayers and trained by a faithful father's earnest teachings cannot sin as cheaply as others. You know that in doing evil you have to go against all your home influences—some of you would have to go over hedge and ditch to get to Hell, after having such parents as you have had. Mr. Whitefield tells us of a young man who said that he could not live in the house that his father had left him, for, as he coarsely put it, "Every chair and table in it stinks of piety." He could not be happy in it, he said, living as he lived, while he

remembered what his father used to do there. If I am addressing any men or women who have sinned against early training, I remind them most solemnly that their guilt has an extraordinary blackness about it! I am sure that Absalom was a greater sinner because he rebelled against a loving father, who cried over him, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Oftentimes, in my youth, I felt that I could not live without Christ, for my mother's sake, for my father's sake, for my grandfather's sake whom I revered so much. It was a great inducement to me to keep from the ways of sin and to seek after their God and Savior. And it should be to every right-minded young man, to every right-minded boy or girl, a sweet inducement to seek the Lord because He is your father's God. But if you throw this all away. If you are determined that you will *not* know the God of your fathers, then on your head shall rest the greater sin!

In the next place, *this young man undid all his father's actions*. He repaired the altars that his father had thrown down and he threw down the altars which his father had built up. Do I address one who is trying to do that—seeking to change all that was done by those who went before you? You have turned the house upside down. You have altered the character of your father's business. You have discharged his godly servants. Everything that used to be is changed—people hardly know the place, now, after the alterations which you have made—and you have gloried in them! You said to yourself, as you came in here, tonight, that if you lived, you would turn the thing upside down worse than ever! Oh, is it so, that you think it is such a desirable thing to be undoing all that was done by your godly ancestors and predecessors?

Then, *this Manasseh served false gods*. You say that *you* do not so. Oh, but if I speak, and your conscience speaks, will not the still small voice whisper to you that you have been doing just that? Your lusts, are they not your god, young man? Are you not giving your very body to the commission of sin? And strong drink—do you not worship that vile thing? Or have you even taken to gambling? There are many ways in which men ruin themselves and this is one of the chief of them, just now, in this city. What is the sin of which you are most fond? *That* is your god and, oh, I fear that I am not talking to the wind! I fear that I am speaking distinctly into the ears of men and women who have forsaken the living God and given Him no thought, whatever, much less the love of their hearts. They are living for self, for vanity, for pleasure, for iniquity in some form or other! Are there not some whose god is their belly and others whose god is Mammon, all of them minding earthly things? I only speak in a quiet style to you, but, were I to address you as I might, I think that I could speak as with thunder and lightning on such a subject as this, for the multitudes of this city are not the worshippers of the one living and true God, but of other gods—many of them diabolical gods, for they are demons, and not God!

This man, Manasseh, had gone farther, even, than that, for *he had desecrated the Lord's courts*. He had set up Baal and Ashtaroth in the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem! Well now, there are some, today, who do this, for they make even their attendance at the House of God to be an

occasion for evil! I have been shocked, sometimes, when I have found persons going out from worship across to the nearest gin palace, or coming up to the place of prayer, not with any idea of hearing to profit, but to meet some friend and that for an evil, rather than a commendable design! O God, how is Your House defiled, even tonight! Some sit here who have come with the worst of motives—they are rather grieving the Holy Spirit by being in the assembly of God's people than bringing any blessing upon themselves!

Manasseh had gone still farther in the way of evil, *for he had dedicated his children to the devil* by passing them through the fire unto Moloch. After they had been set apart unto God by circumcision, he tried, as it were, by giving them a baptism of fire, to dedicate them more fully to the false god. Nobody here will dedicate his children to the devil, surely, yet many do. Have I not seen a father dedicate his boy to the devil, as he has encouraged him to drink? I heard one say, the other day, "Take a pull at it, boy. Open your shoulders." He wanted him to drink like a man! And do not many in this great city dedicate their children to the devil by allowing them to go into all kinds of licentiousness until they become the victims of vice? Do I speak to any here who have brought up their children after a "fashionable" style? Well, there is not much difference between passing your girls and boys through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom and bringing them up very "fashionably!" I have known parents grow rich and then they have hardly cared to take their children to the humble place of worship where they used to go—they must devote them to the world and bring them up in such a way that if they do not go to Hell, it will be ten thousand miracles! Mind what you do with your children. If you are determined to perish, yourselves, yet add not to your other transgressions the great sin of passing your children through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom!

Still, even this abomination did not satisfy Manasseh. He was a very glutton for iniquity, so *he fraternized with the devil* by seeking after all kinds of supernatural witcheries and wizardries. It seemed as if he could not get far enough away from God! Everything that was forbidden appeared just suited to his depraved taste and if he *must* not do it, why, then he resolved that he *would* do it! I am drawing my bow at a venture now, but the arrow will go between the joints of somebody's harness. I may be speaking to some who have made a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell. "Thus says the Lord, your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with death shall not stand." Give yourself up to all manner of iniquities as you may, yet the Grace of God is able to deliver you from the terrible bondage!

Not satisfied, even, with this awful form of evil, *Manasseh led others astray*. All Judah and Israel felt the force of this evil king's influence and the people seemed as eager for idolatry and every kind of vice as the king, himself, was. Alas, when the weather bell allures all the flock to their destruction! You, young man, know that you are leading others in the house away from God. And, young woman, your influence on your sisters is very destructive. I may be addressing some man who has even *gloried* in the shameful fact that he has led others in the ways of sin!

It is an awful picture that I have to paint in giving you Manasseh's portrait. I hardly care to go through with it, but I must, in the hope that some other great sinner may say, "If such a man as *that* was, nevertheless, forgiven, why should not I be?"

If worse could be, here was one thing worse than I have mentioned. God spoke to Manasseh, sent His Prophets to him, but he would not hear. He that is often reprov'd intensifies his sin. If you did not know better, if you had never been warned, if nothing had ever crossed your path to stop you from evil, why then, there might be some excuse for you! Behold, tonight, a hand lays hold upon your horse's bridle and throws the animal back upon its haunches—and a voice cries out in a tone of authority, "You shall go no farther! In the name of the living God, I bid you dismount and bow the knee and seek mercy." It may be that you will reject my feeble words as you have refused others, much more powerful, but that would be a terrible adding of sin to sin.

And then, to crown all, *Manasseh persecuted the people of God*. "Manasseh shed very much innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." It is said—we do not know whether it was so, or not—but it is highly probable that he caused Isaiah to be cut in sunder with a wooden saw. An awful agony of death, indeed, for so grand a Prophet. Now, *you* never killed anybody. You were not willing—you could not do such a thing, I know, but yet how many there are who have added to all their other sins—that of *ridiculing God's people*? O husband, if you have persecuted your wife, do not so again, I beseech you! There is sin enough for you to answer for without adding that awful iniquity. He that ridicules and persecutes the people of God, does, as it were, put his finger into God's eye, and it will not be long before Jehovah, Himself, will deal with him. The God of patience may bear long with him, but, in the end, the persecutor shall not go unpunished!

Now, heaping up all that I have said, mountain on mountain, foul sin upon foul sin, I may say of Manasseh that he is a compound of every sort of wickedness! I scarcely know what more of evil he could have done, yet *he was pardoned*, and if you look straight up there, amidst the glorious band that sing before the Throne of God of Free Grace and dying love, you will see Manasseh in the front rank! And you will hear his voice among the sweetest and the loudest of them all, shouting, as we sang just now—

***"Oh may this strange, this matchless Grace,
This God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise,
And all the angelic choirs above!
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"***

When he was pardoned, this is how it came about. *Being in great trouble, he turned to Jehovah, his God*. Yes, it is by the way of trouble that many are rescued from sin. They are brought to have just a little taste of the fruit of sin and that tree bears very bitter fruit. And when they have a taste of it, then they turn to God. I could not help saying, the other day, of a young man, "Well, if he should have to suffer for his sin, it may be the saving of him." Sometimes the sorrow that follows upon transgres-

sion is the only way by which the transgressor can be delivered from it. So Manasseh was brought among the thorns and *then* he turned to Jehovah.

And we are also told that *he humbled himself greatly*. Great sinners must have great humbling. If you want to be saved, you who have greatly transgressed, bow very low—lie in the very dust before God. Nothing will do for you but to prostrate yourself before the Lord in the confession of your sin. Do not attempt to cloak it. Make no apologies for it, but humble yourself greatly before God.

Then it is added of Manasseh that *he prayed*. Prayer has wondrous power to bring peace to a troubled conscience, but, mind you, it must be *prayer mixed with faith*. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved,” is the Gospel command to an awakened sinner! Pray with your whole heart until the Lord hears you and sends you a gracious answer of peace! God heard Manasseh, dealt graciously with him and brought him back to his kingdom. But, best of all, the Lord first of all brought him back from his sin and made a new man of him! And, by His Grace, Manasseh set to work to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, to lead back his people to the worship of God and to clear the House of the Lord from the idols with which he had polluted it! Oh, that the Lord would speak to some man, tonight, who has been a slave of sin and break his bonds asunder! It may be done in a moment! God’s Grace can take a slave of Satan who wears manacles on his hands, fetters on his legs and chains about his heart—and the Lord shall only *speak* and that man’s chains shall drop from him and, in a moment, he shall be free! And he shall go home to change everything and to astonish his old companions with the story of the marvelous miracle that the Grace of God has worked!

I am not trying to preach to you with any fine words. I do not need to do that, but if God would apply His Truth to your hearts, it would be a thousand times better than the grandest of human oratory! And why should He not do so? Where is the man who would not ask Him to do it, the unsaved soul that came in here resolved on sin? O Spirit of the living God, lead that soul to cry to Jesus, now, and to trust Him to give immediate deliverance! You need not wait till you get home—this transformation may be worked in a moment! This marvelous change is the miracle of Christianity! Those who say that it does not take place, say so for lack of knowing better. We have seen it! Yes, we have felt it! Do I not remember when, from the depth of conscious sin, condemned as I was in my own judgment and ready to be swallowed up in the jaws of Hell, I leaped into eternal peace and into new life from hearing that word, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? Let some other poor soul look to Christ and he or she shall be saved as I was!

There was more that I had meant to say about Manasseh’s case, but I think I have said enough about his sin and his salvation, so now let us turn to the other side of our subject.

II. I shall spend only a very few minutes upon my second head. LET US CONSIDER WHY THERE SHOULD BE OTHERS LIKE MANASSEH. I will give you a very few considerations. Will you please put them away in your hearts, you for whom they are intended, you who are great sinners

and have not yet found the Savior? I should say, judging from many probabilities, that God will save other great sinners as He saved Manasseh.

I should say so, first, because He speaks to such great sinners and *commands them to repent*. I will only give you the one command mentioned in that part of the first chapter of Isaiah which we have read and the other that is recorded in the 55th Chapter of the same Book. The Lord is speaking to men whose hands were full of blood—that is an awful condition for anyone to be in—yet He says, “Wash you, make you clean.” “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Well now, if the Lord bids men repent and turn to Him, He must mean that He will save them! It would be a cruel tantalizing of the human heart to say, “Repent,” and yet not to save those who do so! God’s calls to repentance are promises of forgiveness. Where He says, in the 55th of Isaiah, “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord,” you do not wonder that it is added, “and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” The very duty of repentance gives a hope of pardon. Is it not so? Do you not catch this idea? Do you not know that God has commanded even *you* to repent, great sinner as you are? If so, there is implied in the command a promise to receive you!

But, then, notice, next, *the great promises God has given to great sinners*. The Bible is full of them and the promises are not put in for sinners of a certain degree, only, but *all* the guilty are bid to come, believe and live. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “*Whoever* will, let him take the water of life freely.” The gate of mercy is set wide open and over the portal is inscribed the invitation, “Come and welcome; come and welcome.” Have you never heard the story of a man who, in his dream, thought that he stood outside the gates of Glory? He saw a company come up to Heaven’s gate, singing as they went along, and when they had entered, there were great shouts and much sounding of trumpets. And he asked, “Who are these?” And it was told him, “This is the noble host of Prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, and they have come up here.” His eyes filled with tears as he said, “I cannot go in with them.”

Then there came another company, a slender band, who sang to the praise of Almighty Grace and entered Heaven amidst triumphant shouts, and he asked, “Who are they?” And the answer was, “That is the godly fellowship of the Apostles.” “Alas,” he said, “I cannot enter with *them*.” And the tears stood in his eyes, again. He was cheered as he heard the joyous tramp of others who came along—these wore the red uniform and they sang psalms of victory and, when they entered through the gate of pearl, there were exultant cries amidst the glorified, and the man said, “I pray you, tell me, who are these?” And they answered, “These are the noble army of martyrs.” Then the tears flowed still more freely, for he said, “I cannot enter with them.”

He was in despair till he saw a great white-robed company coming up the hill, but, as he looked at them, he recognized Saul of Tarsus among them, and the woman who was a sinner, and the Philippian jailor, and Manasseh, and they came along chanting right lustily the praises of Free Grace and dying love. He heard that this was the company of sinners saved by Sovereign Grace and he said to himself, "I think I can enter with them," so he joined the train and stole in within the gate. But he said within himself, "There will be no songs of welcome, no shouts of exultation for us." What was his astonishment, however, to find all Heaven ringing with a louder shout than ever because *great sinners* had come home to Heaven, saved by the blood of the Lamb! This is not a dream, it is a fact, so I expect, since there are so many precious promises in God's Word that a good many great sinners will be saved!

I expect it, again, from *the Nature of God*. God is merciful and He is Infinite in every attribute, so that He is prepared to be greatly gracious. Oh, yes, if there are any little sinners about, and they trust in Jesus, He will forgive them, but, oh, how He delights when there comes along a great sinner and He blots out all the sins of the Jerusalem sinner and makes him perfectly clean! You may be willing to sign a receipt for sixpence or a shilling, but really, it seems more worthwhile, when you do get a pen in hand, to write a receipt for a thousand pounds! So, God delights to give a receipt where there has been great sin and to pardon great iniquity! I should say, judging from the greatness of God's mercy, that there would be a great many sinners saved!

And I should say it yet more positively from what I know of *the value of the blood of Jesus*. I see on yonder—

**"Green hill, far away,
Outside the city wall,"**

there stands a tree and on it hangs the Glory of the universe put to shame by men, the everlasting Son of God bleeding and dying, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." I cannot set a limit to Christ's love! I should not like to *attempt* the task—can you? He dies. His crimson tears put out the sun, the touch of His Cross tears the rocks asunder. O great sinners, from the Glory of our crucified Savior, I expect to see many of you saved!

I will say no more upon this point, but beg you to go and try it. Men and women, if you have not yet obtained mercy, go home and fall on your knees before God—and do not get up until you have received it! Even now, plead the promise, "O Lord, You have said that You will forgive all who believe in Christ. I know that You cannot lie. I trust Your dear Son, therefore, O Lord, save me!" Cast yourselves at the feet of the crucified Christ and, trusting in Him, pray earnestly until the answer of peace comes to your heart!

Just notice this, that from now on impenitence is inexcusable! I can imagine a great sinner saying, "It is no use for me to repent, for I can never be forgiven." But now that we proclaim to you free pardon through the finished Sacrifice of Christ, impenitence becomes a sevenfold crime! Turn you, turn you, turn you, turn you! Quit your sins! Fly to Christ and begin a new life, for there is forgiveness for the very chief of sinners!

There is forgiveness for theft, for lying, for fornication, for adultery, for murder—there is forgiveness for the most crimson and scarlet sins—for all who leave them and fly to Jesus! Trust Him, for His Grace will enable you to start anew!

As for despair, it is damnable. While the story of Manasseh stands on record, no mortal has a just excuse to perish in despair! No one is justified in saying, “God will never forgive me.” Read over again the history of Manasseh. See to what lengths of sin he went, to what extravagant heights of evil he climbed, and then say to yourself, “Did Sovereign Mercy reach *him*? Then it can also reach *me*! I will draw near to the great King at once and sue for pardon at His Mercy Seat.”

As I shall meet you again in that Great Day when Heaven and earth shall rock and reel beneath the footsteps of the coming Judge, I beseech you, let us meet on good terms on that day! Let me not be there to be a swift witness against anyone for his condemnation, but rather let me say, “We spoke together on that midsummer evening in 1888 and we remember it, for that night we gave our hearts to Christ, and now we meet in Heaven!”

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I have not been talking to you, you see, but you are not like the prodigal’s elder brother—you will not fit here and growl because there is nothing for you. I know what many of you have been doing—you have been praying, “Lord, bring Brother Prodigal home!” Perhaps, after all, some of you have been grumbling because you have not had even a kid to feed upon, tonight, that you might make merry with your friends. But if a sinner has come to Jesus, if Brother Prodigal comes home, why, then the calf will get killed and you will have your share of it, and we shall have music and dancing, tonight, over sinners saved! The great Father’s joy shall flow over into our hearts and we will rejoice with Him! May He send a blessing! I beseech you, pray for it, for Jesus’ sake!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—201, 202, 568.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 Chronicles 33:1-20; Isaiah 1:2-19.

2 Chronicles 33:1. *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign.* He was, therefore, born after the time when Hezekiah was raised up from the bed of sickness. That prolongation of life was not all mercy—I am not sure that we should be so eager for such an extension of earthly existence either for ourselves or for others. Had Hezekiah been able to foresee what would be the abominations of the first part of Manasseh’s reign, should he come to the throne of Judah, I think that the godly king might have been content to die at once rather than live any longer to become the father of such a sinner—and one who would prove to be such an enemy of the true faith. “Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign.” It was too early for a youth to reign over any nation. It is a great temptation and a serious peril, when an individual has too much power before he reaches his manhood. It would have been far better for

Manasseh if his accession to the throne had been postponed for a good while. You who are very young and are entrusted with wealth and position, may God keep you from going wrong! It will need great Grace to preserve you in the right path.

1. *And he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem.* Manasseh's was a long reign, a varied reign and, at first, a wicked reign of the very worst kind. Sometimes men are spared, notwithstanding their sin. Manasseh's was one of the longest reigns on record—"He reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem."

2. *But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* The Lord drove out the Canaanites for the very sins that Manasseh committed! If we follow in the sins of others, we must not wonder if we share in their doom. It is a sad thing, however, when the child of such a father as Hezekiah does evil in the sight of the Lord, "like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom Jehovah had cast out before the children of Israel."

3. *For he built, again, the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down.* These high places were, at first, built for the worship of God, the true God—but, then, the Law of Jehovah was that there should be only one altar, namely, that at Jerusalem. This was not Popery, but Ritualism—it was *adding* something to the simple worship of God and, therefore, it was wrong. He who goes a little way in sin will soon go a long way. It is always a mercy to stop where you ought to stop and not begin going down. Hezekiah had broken down the high places and his son, Manasseh, rebuilt them.

3. *And he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.* He not only worshipped them, but he *served* them. He threw his whole strength into the propagation of this form of idolatry. They who build altars to God, contrary to the Lord's Law, will soon have false gods! First, men set up *images* to remind them of the true God, and then they go off to the worship of the idols, or false gods. Oh, that we may have Grace to make no similitude of the Lord and to set up nothing contrary to the simple teaching of the Word of God!

4-5. *Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the House of the LORD.* There was plenty of room elsewhere for them if Manasseh needed them, but nothing would do for him but that in the *House of God*, itself, must be built altars for the worship of the sun and all the host of stars!

6. *And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards.* All which is imitated, nowadays, by certain persons who try to break through the veil which parts us from the spiritual world. Manasseh did this on a large scale.

6-11. *He worked much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the House of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, In*

this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever: neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers, so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole Law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen. Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. If you will not learn anywhere else, you will have to be taught among thorns, in chains and in exile. There are some men who will never go to Heaven except through a sea of affliction and trial. Oh, for wisdom to yield to Almighty Grace at once!

12, 13. *And when he was in affliction, he asked the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him, again, to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God. He had set up Baal and Ashtaroth, but now he knows who is the true God, and he bows before Jehovah.*

14-17. *Now after this, he built a wall outside the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the House of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the House of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice, still, in the high places, They do the same, today, and we cannot get them away from them. Even some who love the Gospel yet cling to the old Romish rites and ceremonies. Ah, men do love to multiply outward performances instead of spiritual worship! The one altar of Calvary is not enough for them—they must have many altars—“Nevertheless the people did sacrifice, still, in the high places.”*

17. *Yet unto the LORD their God only.* So far, it was well, but it would have been better if they had given up all those altars.

18-20. *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer, also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon, his son, reigned in his place. The short passage, which I am going to read from the first chapter of Isaiah, seems to get a fine illustration in this story of Manasseh.*

Isaiah 1:2, 3. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider. Heaven and earth might well be called to witness such strange ingratitude as this of which the Lord had to complain of!*

4. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. What a terrible indictment and every word of it was true!*

5-9. *Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. As the Prophet's vision proceeds, the true state of the people is seen.*

10-15. *Hear the Word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the Law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot! Away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. They were horribly wicked people, they could hardly have been worse. They were so bad that even their prayers were not fit for God to hear. Yet He says—*

16-19. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. What blessed words of mercy! Oh, that everyone of us may prove them true in our own case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.*

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A MIRACLE OF GRACE

NO. 3505

A SERMON
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

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

MANASSEH was born three years after his father's memorable sickness. You will remember that Hezekiah was stricken with a mortal disease, and Isaiah, the Prophet, come to him and said, "Thus says the Lord, Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live." He appears to have been startled and appalled at the tidings and gave vent to his feelings with bitter tears. Evidently he was afraid at the time to face death. He had probably been indulging a worldly spirit and, besides this, it lay as a heavy burden upon his heart that he had no son whom he should leave as his successor in the kingdom. In deep distress of soul, accordingly, he turned to the wall and prayed to the Lord. With piteous weeping and earnest pleading he besought that his life might be spared. His prayer was heard, his tears were seen and his petition was granted by God. His days were prolonged by 15 years. In the third year of those 15 years, his son, Manasseh, was born to him. Had he known, I think, what sort of a son would have risen up in his place, he might have been content to die, rather than to be the father of such a persecutor of God's people, and such a setter up of idolatry in the land! Alas, full often we know not what we pray for! We may be covetous of an apparent blessing which would prove to be a real curse both to ourselves and to thousands of others. You prayed, mother—yes, prayed fervently—for the life of that dear babe whom God was pleased to take away from you. You cannot know what disposition the child would have shown, what temptations would have befallen it, or what consequences would have come of its life. Could some parents have read the history of their children from the day

of their birth, they might rightly have wished that they had never been born. We had better leave such matters with God and submit to His Sovereign will. He knows better than we do, for He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. Thank God these affairs are not in our own hands! They are in far better and wiser keeping than ours.

Manasseh's mother was named Hephzibah, a beautiful name. I wonder whether Hezekiah gave her the name because she was his delight, or because his gratitude inspired it, as he was then, himself, delighting in his God? I can scarcely think that at such a time he would have chosen one who had not also chosen God! Therefore let us think of her as a godly woman. But in that case she could have had little enough delight in her son and, sometimes, I should think, when she saw him pursuing the people of God with the sword, and sinning with a high hand, she must have been ready to say, "Call me no more Hephzibah, but call me Marah, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me." It is not always that the thing which makes us glad today will make us glad tomorrow. Let children be accounted a heritage of the Lord. They are the joy of our hearts and the flowers of our homes. But what will they be to us when the guileless, sportive days of their childhood have run out? Unless God sends His blessing with them, the increase of our families may be the sorrow of our lives. Evil passions and propensities develop themselves in our children with their growth, and if the Grace of God does not subdue their sinful disposition, we may have to rue the day that they were born!

Manasseh's name signified "forgetfulness." I hope his father did not forget his training and leave him to those young courtiers who always hang about kings' palaces and are pretty sure to instill into a young prince's mind more vanity than virtue, and seek his favor and patronage for the popular party. There was a superstitious section in those days, cultivating idolatry and pouring contempt on the Evangelical brethren, whose cause his father, Hezekiah, had espoused so earnestly and defended all his days. That new religion, imported from among the heathen, had its meretricious attractions. Was there not a great deal to please the eyes in its pageant, and much to charm the ears in its worship? The beautiful artistic work in the statuary of its idols and the fine display of pomp in all the ceremonies—did not these appeal to a cultivated taste? The old-fashioned Puritanical order of worshipping at one Temple, where the service was bald and where there was scarcely anything to be seen except by the priests, themselves, was becoming effete. Would it not be better to go with the times, take up with Baalim and Ashtaroth, do homage to the sensuous proclivities of the common people and make friendly alliances with nations holding other creeds? I should not wonder but they talked to the young man in that fashion, and he—oblivious of what God had done for his sire and forgetful that in the long history of the house of Judah the people had always been smitten when they turned aside to idols and that they only prospered when they cleaved to

the living God! And so Manasseh fell into the snare and sinned with a high hand.

I shall introduce him to you first as *a loathsome monster of guilt*. Then, secondly, I shall show you how the hand of God followed him till *he became a piteous spectacle of misery*. After which—blessed be God!—we shall have to mount into a clearer atmosphere when we point him out to you as he became afterwards—*a miracle of Grace*. And in fine we shall have to admire him as *a delightful picture of genuine repentance*. We must begin by considering him as—

I. A LOATHSOME MONSTER OF GUILT.

I cannot imagine that any of my hearers can have been so great a sinner as Manasseh. I shall not attempt to draw a parallel between him and anyone else. Still, I should not wonder if some of you may be led to draw some such parallel for yourselves. If you do so, I pray the Lord to give you such a sense of your own guilt as shall compel you to seek pardon!

Deep was the crime, and daring was the impiety of Manasseh, in that *he undid all the good work of his pious father*. What Hezekiah had painfully worked at the web, he began to unravel as fast as he could. That which the father built up for God, the son pulled down—and that which the father had cast down because it was evil—the son at once began to reconstruct! I must confess I have known sons do the same. Because they have hated their father's piety, as it has been a restraint upon their sin, they have vowed that if it ever came into their power to do as they liked, there should be a change in the household. As I passed a certain house this week a friend said to me, "Many a Prayer Meeting has been held in that farmhouse. People used to come for miles around there to meet and pray." "Is that a thing of the past?" I asked, "Are no Prayer Meetings held there now?" "Oh, no," he replied, "the father died and his reprobate son came into the property. A Prayer Meeting, indeed! No. He defied his mother to attempt such a thing and after having stripped her, and stripped the little estate of all there was that was worth the having, he has gone away and has not been heard of for many a year. As far as he could, he tore down everything that belonged to his father that reminded him of his God."

Mr. Whitefield used to tell of a wicked son who said he would not live in the same house that his father had inhabited, for he said that every room in the house stunk of his father's religion and he could not bear it. There are men who after such manner devise mischief. But ah, young man, you cannot sin in that atrocious way without incurring extraordinary guilt! It will be remembered that you sin against the Light of God—it will be remembered at the Last Great Day that you were prayed for—that you were instructed in the right way. Nor will you sin so cheap as others—*others*, did I say? I means such as, when they transgress, only follow an evil example and run in the path which their parents taught them. Oh, how I grieve over ungodly young men who treat their father's God with dishonor and despite!

Manasseh's sin was aggravated by the fact that *he chose to follow the very worst examples*. Though he had in his father one of the best patterns of purity, that would not do, but he must cast about him to see whom he could imitate. Upon whom do you think he did light? Why, upon Ahab—the Ahab of whom God had said that he would cut off every one of his house and not leave one remaining—a threat which had been executed, for the blood of Ahab had been licked by dogs in the field of Naboth and Jezebel, his wife, had been devoured of dogs! Yet this young man must choose Ahab to be his pattern, so he set up Baalim, even as Ahab had done of old! The like folly I have known to be committed by young men in these days. It may be there are those here who have not found anybody that they could imitate, until at last they sought out some licentious individual, perhaps, of years gone by, whom they have elected to be their leader. Why, half the youth of England used, at one time, to be infatuated with Lord Byron. The glare of his genius blinded them as to the terrible hue of his character and the atrocity of his conduct, so they followed headlong in his track, because, forsooth, he was a great man and a poet! Affecting wit, they bid defiance to pure morals. Alas, for the men whose sentiments, whose language and whose actions betray the hardihood and the daring of vicious characters they are prone to emulate! Though they know better, they deliberately choose the worst models they can copy. What extravagance man will perpetrate in sin!

But this Manasseh sought out for himself *unusual and outlandish sins*. Bad as Ahab was, he had not worshipped the hosts of heaven. That was an Assyrian worship. And Manasseh must import from Assyria and Babylonia worship that was quite new. He set up the image Ashra, which you may, perhaps, have seen on the slabs that have been brought from Nineveh—a tree bearing souls, intended to represent all the hosts of heaven. He carved this in the house of God and set it up for worship! We read in the Prophets that the people used to stand in front of the Temple and bow before the rising sun, worshipping the hosts of heaven. He was not satisfied with common sin. We have known sinners of this class—they are not content merely to sin as others do—they are ambitious to invent some fresh sin. Like Tiberius, who offered a prize if somebody would find him out a new pleasure, they want to discover a new species of impiety which shall draw attention to themselves! They must be singular in whatever they attempt, even if it comes to being singularly wicked! Such was Manasseh. He could not be satisfied to run in the race with others and mingle with the ill-fashion of his times—swiftly as they would fly, he must distance them all!

Beyond this, *he insulted God to His face*. Here, perhaps, his sin culminates. It was not enough to build idol temples for idol worship, but he must set up the idols and their altars in the Temple of Jehovah! Such arrogance, as we think of it, makes our blood chill. And ah, one trembles to tell it! Not a few men have thus invoked upon their bodies and their souls the curse of the Almighty. So desperately have they been set on trans-

gression, that they have lifted their hands and defied their Maker! Had He not been God—the God of All Patience—He would have resented their defiance and have suddenly smitten them down to Hell! But being God, and not man, He has borne with them. He is too great to be stirred by their insults. He has put it by and let it lie, winking alike at their ignorance and their assumption, for a while, until their iniquity shall be full—and then, in His Justice, will He visit it upon their head! There are not a few in our great city who continually do all that they can to provoke God and to show how little they reverence Him—how utterly they ignore His claims on their homage. They will go out of their way to introduce blasphemies into their common conversation and to express their disgust and contempt for everything chaste and comely, sacred and godly. Such was Manasseh. He set up the altars of the false gods in the house of the living God!

Is not his character black enough? No, we have not laid on the thickest touches yet. We are told he made *his children to pass through the fire*. That is to say, he passed them between the red-hot arms of Moloch, that they might belong forever as long as they lived, to that fiendish deity! If we do not admit that men do this now-a-days, they fall little short of the same cruelty and crime. Many a man teaches his child to drink arduous spirits! They train him in habits which he knows will lead him to drunkenness—does his utmost to pass the child through the red-hot arms of the spirit-fiend, the Moloch of the present time! Many a man has taught his child to blaspheme. If he has not deliberately purposed it, he has actually effected it, fully conscious that he was doing so. What was his example but a deliberate lesson? Yes, there are people who seem to take delight in the sins of their children, laughing at the iniquities they have instructed their own sons and daughters to perpetrate! Do I address a father who, for many years, has never attended a place of worship on the Sabbath—who has often gone home reeling drunk and, though somewhat reformed, himself, sees his own son plunging into every vice that he was, himself, once habituated to? Let me ask you, Do you wonder at it? Do you wonder at it? You have passed your children through the flames—what marvel that they were singed, and that the smell of fire is upon them? Oh, it is a crying sin that men will not only go to Hell, themselves, but they must drag their children with them! Many a man has not been satisfied to be ruined, but he must ruin some young woman who, perhaps, once had religious convictions. He becomes her husband and forbids her to attend the House of God. As for his children, they may, perhaps, be sent to the Sunday school to get them out of the way in the afternoon, yet any good they might learn there is soon dissipated by the scenes and sounds they witness and hear under the roof of their home! Why, multitudes in this city—we know it, and they must know it themselves—are ruining their children, deliberately compassing their perdition! Is this a small sin, an insignificant mistake in their training? I think not!

Moreover, Manasseh proceeded further, for *he made a league with devils*. There were, in his day, certain persons who professed to talk with departed spirits, supposing that the devil had the means of communicating with them about things to come. Now, whether this fellowship with familiar spirits is a delusion and a lie, as I suspect it is, or whether there may be a mystery of Satan involved in it, I do not know. But certain it was that Manasseh tried to get as near the devil as he could. If he could get him to be his friend, he was well content to make a covenant with Hell, so that it might answer his purposes. Let him have good luck—little did he care for God. He would consult a wizard. Superstition led him to that, but the good Word of God he utterly despised. And there are some who have done this—some here, perhaps. I will not suppose they have lent themselves to those silly superstitions, or resorted to those deceitful or deceived mediums who perform in the dark. I should think, in these modern times of popular education, anyone is fit to be confined in a lunatic asylum who is beguiled by that snare! Intelligence should protect you from imposture. But there are those who, if the devil would help them, would be glad enough to shake hands with him and say, “Hail, fellow! Well met!” If they do not entertain the devil, it is no fault of theirs. They have set the table for him and furnished the house, and made themselves quite ready for any evil spirit that chooses to come to them! Oh, what iniquity this is! They will not have God—they will have Satan! They cast off the great Father in Heaven, but the archenemy of souls—with *him* they make a covenant, and contract a league!

Could sin go much farther than this? It could, and it did, for this man, Manasseh, *led the whole nation astray!* Being a king, he had great power and he used his authority and exerted his influence to induce his subjects to follow his pernicious course. I often wonder what will be the horror of a man that has lived in gross sin when, in the next world, he meets those who he betrayed and seduced into iniquity, when he begins to see, in the murky gloom of that intolerable pit, a pair of eyes which somehow or other seem to hold him fixed and fast? He recognizes them. He has seen them somewhere before, and those eyes flash fire into the soul as though they would utterly consume him, and a voice says, “A thousand curses on you! You are he that led me first into sin—enticed me from a virtuous home, and from godly associations—to become your partner in iniquity. A blast be on you forevermore!” What company they have to keep in that place of torment! How they will gnash their teeth at one another in dreadful rage, each one charging the other with being his destroyer! Oh, there is remorse enough in store for a man who ruins himself, but who can tell the pangs that shall scourge his soul who betrays his fellow creatures and precipitates them into everlasting ruin? Verily, dear Friends, we stand aghast at the picture of such a man as Manasseh—he set no bounds to his sin. He greedily sinned with both hands and when the messengers came from God to tell him of it, he was angry with them. Tradition says that he sawed the Prophet Isaiah in half for

daring to reprove him! But it is not from tradition, but from Revelation, we learn that he made Jerusalem to swim with blood from one end to the other, putting to death all those who would not go in his ways and follow his devices! Persecution of the saints of God is a scarlet sin that calls aloud to Heaven for vengeance! Manasseh was guilty of this, among other crimes. I am sick at heart, and my tongue is weary of the story. Let me turn to another branch of the narrative. This terrible monster of iniquity presently became—

II. A SINGULAR SPECTACLE OF MISERY.

A few words will suffice to describe it. The Assyrian king sent his captain, one Tartan, who besieged the city till it was devastated—and King Manasseh fled. It would appear that he hid himself in a thorn brake and was dragged out from it, and fettered and manacled with heavy irons. There remains a representation at the present time of some Jewish king—we cannot be sure it was Manasseh—who was dragged before the King of Babylon. At any rate, it represents what was done to Manasseh, whether the like treatment befell any other Jewish king or not. He has two rings—a ring on each ankle, and a heavy bolt between them, and his hands are fastened in the same manner. He is brought before the king at Babylon. There he seems to have been cast into prison and kept in confinement. The cruelties of the Assyrian monarchs are attested by the memorials upon their own palace walls. Therefore, I can fully credit the story told by Jerome, that this Manasseh was himself put into a bronze vessel and subjected to the most intense heat, the Assyrian king abusing him for having passed his own child through the fire in the same manner. That he was kept for many a long month in a dark and dreary dungeon, with only sufficient bread and vinegar given him to sustain his life, appears certain. He must have been wretched to the last degree! His crown gone, his kingdom devastated, his subjects put to unheard of miseries! We are told that the judgment which God executed upon the land was such that it made both ears of him that heard of it to tingle. The king must, therefore, have experienced some indescribable afflictions from the hands of the tyrant of Assyria. Ah, Sinner, though you harden yourself in your transgressions, you will not go unpunished! A bitter end awaits you. Reckless as you are, young man, your father's God will not always be mocked! You have persecuted your wife and your friend, but their unhappiness will return before long to your own bosom. There will come an end to your arrogance and a beginning to your recompenses. Oh, I wish your iniquity would come to an end soon, and that it might end with your conversion! If it does not come to that end, your outlook is gloomy, indeed, for your total destruction will complete the course you are running!

Perhaps I am addressing somebody who has been living in heartless sin until he has become entangled in helpless misery. In this crowd you seem as if you were pointed out, for your heart is ready to break with anguish. Your property is lost, your health is broken up, your character is

blasted—you are a mere wreck, a waif, a stray upon the dark sea! There is none to have compassion upon you. You are a castaway. Even your old companions have forsaken you. The devil, himself, seems to have cast you adrift! You are abandoned and you might cry out and sound your own death knell. “Lost! Lost! Lost!” Well, now, I have a message from God to you. I have come to speak to you, in the name of the Lord, about this man, Manasseh, in the hope that it may be also concerning yourself true—that after having been a prodigy of sin, and a spectacle of misery, you may now become as, in the third place, Manasseh became—

III. A MONUMENT OF GRACE!

Oh, I do not wonder at Manasseh’s sin one half as much as I wonder at God’s mercy! There was the man in the prison. He had never thought of his God except to despise His prerogative and offend against His Laws, till he was immured in that dungeon. Then his pride began to break! His haughty spirit had to yield at last. “Who is Jehovah, that I should serve Him?” he had often said. But now he is in Jehovah’s hands! Lying there half-starved in the prison, a crushed man, he begins to cry, “Jehovah, what a fool I have been! I have stood out against You until at length Your Sovereign Power has arrested me and Your Infinite Justice has begun to avenge my crimes! What shall I do? Where shall I hide from Your wrath? How can I escape? Is it possible to obtain Your pardon?” He began to humble himself. God’s Spirit came and humbled him more and more—he saw how foolish he had been, how wicked his character, how cruel his conduct, how abominable! Thus he spent his days and nights in weeping and in lamentation. It was not the prison he cared so much about. His soul had gone into iron bondage. Then it suddenly flashed across his mind that perhaps God might have mercy on him, so he began to pray! Oh, what a trembling prayer that first prayer was. I think Satan said to him, “It is no use your praying, Manasseh. Why, you have defied the living God to His face! He will tell you to go to the idol gods you have served, repair to the images you have set up and bow before the hosts of heaven you have been known to worship, and see what they can do for you.” No, but in this awful despair he felt he must pray, and surely the first prayer he breathed must have been, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” And in his deep abasement, he continued to pray and plead with God. And that dear Father of ours who is in Heaven heard him! If ever you can bring Him a praying heart, He will bring you a forgiving message! As soon as He saw his poor child broken down and confessing his wrong, He took pity on him, heard, and answered him—and blotted out his sins like a cloud, and his transgressions like a thick cloud! I think I see Manasseh, with his morsel to eat, never enough to stay his hunger, and his little drops of vinegar, saying to himself, “Ah, I don’t deserve this!” He would thank God even for that starving allowance in the depths of his cell, feeling that it was mercy that let him live! “Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” And so it came to pass that he was delivered.

The King of Assyria, for State reasons which I need not mention, determined to put this king on his throne again. He thought that he had broken him down and humbled him enough—that he would make a good viceroy and a faithful lieutenant and that he would be afraid to rebel again. So one bright day he opened wide Manasseh's dungeon, and told him he was going to send him back to Jerusalem. And when he told him that, then Manasseh knew that Jehovah, He was God! This conclusion was forced upon him by the mercy he obtained. "Who," he would say, "but the Most High God could have brought me out of this horrible pit, have released me from the power of this tyrant king, or moved his heart to relent and have compassion on *me*?" As he rode back to Jerusalem, how his heart would be breaking with gratitude! I think I see him when he first got within sight of the walls of that Temple which he had so recklessly profaned. Surely he threw himself upon his face and wept sorely, and then arose and blessed the name of the Lord that had forgiven all his trespasses! And when he entered Jerusalem, and the people gathered round him, what must the greetings have been? Where are those courtiers that had been his companions, who led him into sin? Do they come whining round him? What a rebuff they will get! How will he exclaim, "Get you gone! I am another man. I do not need your company or your counsel." Are there any of those poor people standing in the background—the people that used to meet to pray and worship Jehovah, faithful among the faithless—such as had been known to hide away their Bibles because they were hunted and harried from one retreat to another—a small remnant that had escaped the fangs of the persecutors—did they come forward? How he could look at them, and say, "Ah, you servants of Jehovah, you are my Brothers and Sisters. Give me your hands, for I, too, have found mercy from Heaven, and I am, like you, a child of God." I guarantee you there was singing in Jerusalem that night among the feeble band of the steadfast Believers! And there must have been music in Heaven, too, for the fiery angels must have rejoiced in a conversion that seemed so unlikely, so incredible!

"What? Manasseh saved? Manasseh—that bloodhound—is he transformed by the renewing of his mind, into a lamb of God's flock? What? He, the red-handed persecutor—has he become a professor of the faith he once destroyed?" Ah, yes. Well might Bishop Hall say, "Who can complain that the way of Heaven is blocked against him, when he sees such a sinner enter? Say the worst against yourself, O clamorous Soul! Here is one that murdered men, defied God, and worshipped devils—yet he finds the way to repentance! If you are as vile as he, know that it is not your sin, but your impenitence, that bars Heaven against you! Who can now despair of Your mercy, O God, that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted?" I remember an old lady who would not travel by railway because she thought that some of the bridges were in bad repair, especially the Saltash Bridge, near her own house. Over that bridge she could not be persuaded to pass, for fear her weight would break it down, although

hundreds of tons were carried over it every day. At such folly everybody can smile. But when I hear any man say, "I have committed so much sin that God cannot pardon it," I think his folly is far greater! Look at this huge train that went over that bridge. Behold Manasseh laden with ponderous crimes! Mark what a train of sin there was behind him! Then look at the bridge and see whether it starts by reason of the loaded mass of sins which is rolling over it. Ah, no, it bears up, and so would it bear the weight if all the sins that men have done should roll across its arches! Christ is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him." I do not know where to cast my eyes for the person to whom this message is directed. That he is somewhere in this assembly I entertain no doubt. Do I speak to some Sister who, in an unguarded hour, left the path of virtue, and since then has pursued a course of shame? I pray you accept the message! I deliver it to you. The greatest sin, the utmost guilt, the most incredible iniquity, the most abominable transgressions can be forgiven, and shall be blotted out! The Redeemer lives! The Sacrifice has been offered! The Covenant is sealed! Turn now to the Lord with purpose of heart. Confess the sins. Abjure yourself! Trust in the Infinite Mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, His Son. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Our closing reflection is that Manasseh became—

IV. A PICTURE OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

At once he ceased to do evil. He immediately went to the Temple and *pulled down the idols*. How I would like to have been with him and have had a hand in demolishing them! Down went the images! Then over went the altars! Every stone was dragged right out of the city and flung away. God grant that every image in England may yet be pulled down, battered to pieces, and the small dust thereof flung into the common sewers! May that which is an utter abomination before Heaven stir a righteous indignation on earth! Oh, that our land may be so godly that no respect for fine arts may suffer her to tolerate foul impieties! Manasseh made haste to undo the mischief he had done. This is what every converted man tries to do. All the evil he has ever caused, he tries to stop—he takes vengeance on his former devices—against them he lifts both his hands, raises his voice, and exerts his influence!

Nor did this suffice. Manasseh *began forthwith to do good*. Right speedily he began to repair the altar of the Lord, and to restore the services of God and the ordinances of the Temple to their original purity, according to the Divine statutes. So when a man is truly converted, he will be anxious to join himself to the Lord's people and support the institutions of His house. Nor did Manasseh smother his gratitude, but he presented thank-offerings to God. He was not unmindful of the devout acknowledgments that were due for the great mercy he had received. Like that other great sinner, whose gratitude is recorded in the Gospel—the wom-

an who brought an alabaster box of ointment, very precious, and broke it—like she, I think, he loved much because he had had forgiven much!

And, then, being established in his kingdom, *he proceeded to use his high influence for holy purposes*. He ruled his subjects in the fear of the Lord and made the Law of his God to be the Law of the land, renouncing all strange gods and adhering rigidly to the Book given by Inspiration. Oh, that God would incline the heart of some penitent sinner here at once to bring forth this fruit of conversion! What a change there would be in his house! What a difference his family would see! What an altered man he would appear in his daily avocation, whether he be employer or employed! He would be seeking the conversion of those whom he formerly led astray. Those he once scoffed at and called by evil names, would become his choicest companions. “Can God do this?” asks one. Oh, my dear Hearers, the God that can forgive great sin can also change hard hearts! Cry to Him! If you are unsaved, may His Spirit lead you to seek salvation now. Stay not for tomorrow’s sun! If you are saved, may that blessed Spirit lead you to pray for others, and seek their present and eternal welfare. Watch unto prayer. Let your own faith in God stimulate you to believe that all things are possible. Never give them up, never give them up! Are you a mother—you do not know how prevalent your intercessions may prove. I wonder whether poor Hephzibah was alive when Manasseh was converted? She had grieved over him, doubtless, in his young days. Well, if she did not live to see the fruit of her prayers, yet her prayers lived and her tears were repaid with rich interest! There is many a mother’s son whose heart will be turned to God long after his mother’s bones have been laid in the churchyard. The vision is for an appointed time—though it tarry, wait for it. Your son will yet be brought to Glory through your prayers. Pray on, Brothers and Sisters, pray on for those whose sins and sorrows lay heavily on your heart! Pray on and God will hear you! O poor Sinners, the mercy of God is the antidote for man’s despair. Believe in His mercy. Look for His mercy. Cast yourselves upon His mercy and you shall find His mercy unto everlasting life! God grant it for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 10:46-52**

Let us listen to the record of one of our Lord’s most striking miracles.

Verses 46, 47. *And they came to Jericho: and as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* If he could not see, he could hear, and he made good use of his hearing. If you have not every spiritual ability, yet, Soul, do you use such ability as you have? You can hear the Gospel. Then search into the Word of God and labor to understand it. Are you doing

that? Alas, men talk of what they cannot do, but they are not doing what they can!

48. *And many charged him that he should hold his peace. “Hush! Be quiet! Do not disturb Him! Hear what an eloquent sermon He is delivering.”* Yes, but he thought of his poor blind eyes—and of the only hope he now had before him of having them opened!

48, 49. *But he cried the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calls for you.* How soon they changed their note! The very persons that would have kept him back, now help him on. Ah, when Christ speaks to His people, if they have been indifferent about the good of men, they also grow warm in heart and are ready to help and take interest in the case.

50. *And he, castings away his garment—*Throwing off his old beggar’s cloak.

50, 51. *Rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What do you want Me to do for you? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.* He knew what he wanted, which is more than some people do. It is better, however, to know what is wanted by the soul—even the salvation of God.

52. *And Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.* Christ’s cures do not take many minutes. When He comes to save, He saves men at once. He says, “Light be,” and there is light.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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NO. 3303

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1912.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 14, 1885.

~ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY~

“And Hilkiab answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiab delivered the book to Shaphan. . . Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiab the priest has given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.”
2 Chronicles 34:15, 18, 19.

HILKIAH had found THE BOOK and it was a more important find than if he had discovered a mine of diamonds, or perpetual motion, or a new world! Oh, that Book, that wonderful Book! Was there ever anything like it under Heaven? Well may it be a power when we come to think of what it is—the Book of the Law of the living God! How reverently did he lift it from its hiding place, remove its dust and commence to read its title and contents! This particular Book of the Law was probably the first five Books of Moses, commonly called the Pentateuch. Some have thought that it was only the Book of Deuteronomy, but it is too late in the day for us to decide with confidence its exact form. We know that it was “a Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses” (2 Chron 34:14), probably an autographed copy by Moses. Of that we cannot be sure, but whatever hand may have written the letters, what a Book the Law of the Lord is! The Old Testament is a Divine light which has led multitudes of saints to the Lord’s right hand—and its luster is not dimmed by the New Testament, but increased thereby. Not one tittle of it has failed, or shall fail—it lives and abides forever! Taking an enlarged view of the Law of the Lord today and holding in our hands two Testaments, both the Old and the New, what a marvelous Book the Bible is! Earth does not contain an equal wonder!

It is a Book which *has God for its Author*, for though there are many authors and the Book is divided into many treatises, yet it is all of one as to its innermost authorship, since holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. A Divine originality runs through it all—marks of the Divine Mind abound in every portion and the Holy Spirit still inspires it all and breathes it into the hearts of believing readers. Matthew and Mark, and Luke and John are here, but we scarcely observe them as

compared with the higher light, the Light of God which illuminates every page! The Book is saturated with a heavenly life!

What God has written is to be received with the utmost reverence. It is a pity that so many treat this Sacred Volume as they would treat any ordinary book. They sit on the throne of judgment and sway the scepter of criticism, as if they would call God, Himself, to their bar! Surely they have never heard in their heart and conscience the sound of that question, "Who are you that *replies* against God?" If God is not its Author, this Book is a gross imposture and the sooner we treat it as such the better! But if God is its Author, let us bow before it obediently and accept it as our Infallible Directory.

As it has God for its Author, so it commends itself to us as inestimably precious because *it has God's mind for its matter*. In this Book of the Lord the chief subject is Himself and His ways and His Grace towards us, His creatures. Here the Lord does not so much explain His works as His own personal ways, thoughts and designs to our fallen race. He does not take the pen in hand to explain to us what He has written in the stone book, or to open up to us what He has printed in letters of light in yonder constellations, but to reveal His glorious Grace which He has caused to dwell in all its fullness in Christ Jesus our Lord! He has left us to find out what we may of visible things—a happy and healthful exercise for our minds, but He had something nobler to tell us when He inspired this Book. Herein He has told us His thoughts of man and of the Man, Christ Jesus. His thoughts upon our sin and the ruin that comes of it. His thoughts as to how we may be saved and what shall come out of that salvation. The windows of this Book look towards Heaven and truly they are windows of agate—themselves precious and giving us a view of still more precious things! Its doors open into eternity and its gates lead into Glory. Every page points to holiness and felicity and attracts us thereto. Precious Book! I would say of you what David said of Goliath's sword "There is none like that. Give it to me." You are marrow and fatness, honey, wines on the lees well-refined—yes, manna of angels and water from the Rock, Christ Jesus! Of all soul medicines you are the most potent! Of all mental dainties you are the sweetest! And of all spiritual food you are the most sustaining!

As the Book has God for its Author, and God's mind for its matter, so does it become invaluable to us because *it is directed to us*. It is not a letter written from God to the angels, nor is it sent to a race of beings alien from ourselves. This Book is for men and it is directed not to our curiosity, nor to any of our lower faculties, but to the soul of our life, to the vital spirit of our manhood! It is God's Word to the innermost man—to our immortal part. He speaks here not only to our ears, but to our souls. He directs His teaching not to that part of us which shall die, but to that part of us which shall never cease to be, but shall be immortal as Himself! If ever a man ought to concentrate all his faculties and pray to be in the best mental order, it should be when he comes to study the Word of God upon matters which concern his noblest being. God grant, therefore,

that in our hearts we may feel deep reverence for this marvelous Book which we shall not now lose as Israel almost lost it—whose copies will never become scarce, as they were in Josiah's day. The Word of the Lord will always be precious, but not through scarcity of copies, now that the Bible Society is scattering them thick as autumn leaves! They will always be gems for value and yet as pebbles of the brook for multitude!

He that reads this wondrous Book aright may well value it *because of the blessings which it will bring him*. It will tell him how to be rid of all his sin and free himself from the slavery of Satan. It will teach him how to bear his present burdens and quit all needless cares. It will be a guide to him through the maze of life, a pillow for the bed of death! It will give him joy and peace through believing when the thickest troubles shall gather round about him, and it will make him ready for the future world when brightest glories shall shine upon him! Whatever you need for time or for eternity, this Book shall either give it to you, or point you to Him who has it ready to give to you if you will bend your knee before Him! It is a golden mine of the Truth of God and infinitely more—it is a treasury of blessings and delights, and even then I have not fully described it. It has for you, O sheep of the Lord, all that your Good Shepherd sees that you have need of! Here are the green pastures wherein He makes you to feed and to lie down—and here flow the still waters, whereof if a man drinks, he shall never thirst, but shall joy and rejoice in God forever! I do not wonder that Hilkiyah and Shaphan had the same value for the smaller Book which we Believers in Christ have for the larger edition of it—for even a fragment of it is priceless! I do not wonder that they considered their treasure to be worthy of being brought before the king. If they had discovered where hidden coffers had been concealed by Solomon and the great kings that succeeded him, they would not have procured so glorious a present for the king of Judah as when they suddenly stumbled upon this Book of the Law of the Lord!

I. Tonight I shall try to speak of the whole question under three heads. And the first will be this—here is an instance of that PECULIAR PRESERVATION which God has extended to the Scriptures which He has Inspired. It would seem, from this narrative, that copies of the Word of God had become extremely rare, for no other copy was known to exist. If anyone had known where there was a copy of the Pentateuch, the priest would have known, or the pious king's secretary would have been informed of it. These appear to have been gracious men, learned men—and men to whom the people came—surely if such a thing was procurable, they would have possessed a copy of the Law of the Lord. Perhaps the faithful scattered up and down through Israel and Judah had copies of the Book, but they had grown so accustomed to conceal them from their persecutors that they kept the secret to themselves. If there were other copies, they were not known to those who had the best means of discovering them.

When Hilkiyah discovered this copy of the Word of God, he was greatly surprised and overjoyed. What a singular Providence it was that the Book was not quite destroyed! How fortunate that the one copy should have been left! It is believed by many—and I think that their belief is correct—that this was a standard *copy*. If it was not the original, yet it was an authorized transcript which was to be regarded as the correct text—and it had been laid up in the Ark of the Lord for that purpose. Perhaps in some dark hour, for fear that it would be discovered even in the secret shrine of the tabernacle, a priest had hidden it away. The tradition is that it was buried beneath a heap of stones when Ahaz was seeking out copies of the Word to destroy them. By the Divine Providence of God this one standard copy had been preserved and now came to light! It may have been hidden carefully and then Providence had provided the caretaker. It may have been thrown away carelessly—then Providence had made even that carelessness to be the means of preserving the treasure. In any case, the Law was still among men and it had now fallen into careful and reverent hands. The God who gave it had preserved it!

Now look along through all the ages and if you are a reverent Believer in the Word, you will be filled with grateful wonder that the Sacred Roll has been preserved to us! Through what perils it has passed and yet, as I believe, there is not a Chapter of it lost—no, nor a verse of any Chapter! The misreading of the copies are really so inconsiderable and are so happily corrected by other manuscripts, that our Bible is a marvel in literature for the comparative ease with which the correct text is discoverable! It seems to me that God's Divine Care has extended itself to the whole text, so that, with far less care than would be needed by any classic author, the very words of the Holy Spirit may be known! As the wings of cherubim overshadowed the Mercy Seat, so do the wings of Providence protect the Book of the Lord! As Michael guarded the body of Moses, so does a Divine Care secure the Books of Moses! I invite lovers of history and of famous books to look into the interesting story of the immortality of Scripture. Let us think of that special preservation with reverent gratitude.

The God of Israel had given rules for the preservation of the Scriptures, but they had evidently fallen into disuse. It is expressly laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy that each king was to copy out the Book of the Law for himself. We have no evidence that *any* of them did so! Most of the ordinances of the Lord to His chosen people were neglected almost as soon as they were given. Even in the wilderness, during 40 years, the rite of circumcision, which lay at the base of everything, was unobserved! The feast of tabernacles was not kept for many and many a year. And the Passover, the most solemn of all rites, was not carefully celebrated—indeed, it had never been properly observed from the days of Samuel to the days of Josiah! It had been altered and debased from its original form. Alas, Christian ordinances have suffered from the some tendency to change! This proves the depraved nature of man, and his unwillingness to walk in the path of obedience. The plan of preserving the Sacred

Book by the kings' copying it had fallen into disuse and, therefore, the extreme scarcity of manuscripts around the court—yet even then, the Word did not fail!

Nor was the Scripture alone in danger from the neglect to preserve it, but furious persecutions had been raised against the Holy Volume. The haters of it slew the Prophets, broke down the memorials of God's goodness to His people and polluted the Holy Place of the Most High—and their rage did not spare His statutes. The Law must be destroyed, or they would still be rebuked. You know, Brothers and Sisters, how from century to century that church which has no foundation in the Word of God has, with desperate determination, hunted after every copy of the Inspired Volume to destroy it! It is not very long ago since that unchangeable church called the Scriptures "dangerous pastures." Who and what must the shepherds be who use such language concerning the Law of the Lord? But with all their burnings, they have not destroyed the Book! With all their inquisitions and torture chambers, faith in Scripture has survived! Still the Book teaches and preaches with a Divine Unction and Authority. What Popery could not do, infidelity shall not do! Infidelity, some years ago, was going to blot out the name of Jesus from under Heaven! Its boastful champion said that he was but one man, but in a few years he would undo all that was accomplished by the 12 Apostles! His name is left to curse—the work of God goes on better than ever it did and the grand old Book is scattered everywhere, falling fast and thick as snowflakes in the time of winter! I might almost say that the copies of the Bible are in number comparable to the sands of the sea! Think of nearly a million penny Testaments being scattered in a single year in this one land! These are leaves of the Tree of Life for the healing of the nations! There is a blessing in every line of the Sacred Record both for the present age and for years to come. This Word will abide among men till time shall be no more. God be thanked for it!

The passage before us is a very beautiful instance of how under every difficulty, when every regulation has been neglected, and the utmost fury goes forth against the Word, yet the Word lives and abides forever! The fact is that Providence is the ally of Revelation. From the Word of the Lord, Creation began—by the Word of the Lord Creation is sustained and everything seems to know the source from which it came—and every creature lends itself to the preservation of that grand Word by which it exists! Depend upon it, Brothers and Sisters, the Book is not alone—God is always with it! God has put a wall of fire around the Revelation of His will and with Omnipotence He guards it against all who would harm it! God is always with those who tremble at His Word. And when there shall come times of darkness and of sorrow, and you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, never question what the end will be, for "the Word of the Lord endures forever." He that sits on the floods as King forever and ever, will so order all things that His Word shall have yet greater sway and His Gospel shall conquer the hearts of men!

But, oh, how should we love the Book, and how should we stand up for it, and guard it jealously, since God has guarded it so well! Let every man of God be like Solomon's valiant men of Israel who watched about the bed of the king, each man with his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night—for there is much fear just now for the Truth of God. I mean, of course, to us poor puny beings there is danger—there is no fear in the great heart of the Eternal! There is no fear as to the accomplishment of His purposes, for He is strong in power and not one fails. What our fathers preserved with their blood, we will preserve with our lives. That which bore them to a martyr's death, singing as they went, we will not consent to throw away! If any man has another gospel, let him keep it—I am satisfied with mine. If any man has found another bible, let him read it—I am satisfied with my mother's old Bible and the Bible of my ancestors. If discoveries are to be made concerning a new way of the salvation of men, let them make them who care to do so—the old way has saved me and the old way has saved multitudes of others—and therein shall I abide, God helping me, come what may! And so will you, my Brothers and Sisters—and together we will rejoice that God preserves His Book and continues to give His Holy Spirit with it! God will uphold His Truth that is in this Book and the men that hold that Truth shall be upheld. “Forever, O Lord, your Word is settled in Heaven!” And similar eternal settlements are made for all whose hope is fixed upon that Word!

II. Having glanced at this, I ask you to think for a little upon another point—THE COMMENDABLE COMMUNICATION CONCERNING THIS BOOK. Hilkiyah finds it. Hilkiyah hands it to the royal secretary, whose name was Shaphan. Shaphan reads a bit of it and makes quite sure that it is what it professes to be—and then immediately he goes with it to the king. The king holds a Bible-reading with him and when the king has read the Scared Roll, himself, he summons all the people and reads the Book to them. The point is this—if you have found the Word of God, make it known to others! Keep not this honey to yourself!

Hilkiyah handed to Shaphan the Book without note or comment. It was the Book with no apocryphal matter rolled up with it. It was the Book of the Law of God in its purest state. He who found the Book delighted in it, but he passed it on—and the next passed it on and the next passed it on—and the next circulated it still further. All the nation soon heard of what was written in the Book. The handlers of the Volume do not appear to have tarried long. Hilkiyah rejoiced and said to secretary Shaphan, “I have found the Book of the Law!” And Shaphan did not delay a month, but went straight away to let the king know. And the king, after he had tore his clothes, expressed his sorrow for national sin and enquired at the hand of the Lord's Prophetess, published the Divine message to the people and read the Law to them. The moral is—continually make known God's Holy Word! If you have obtained light, let your brother light his candle at your candle. If you have seen anything of God, tell your brother what you have seen. Let not God's Book grow moldy in your own hand, but pass it on and let another read what you have read to your salvation

and to your comfort, that he also may be saved and comforted! Let your light shine! Scatter the bread of Heaven! Distribute the balm of Gilead!

How can we do this? Well, I believe that it is the duty of every Christian man not only to preach the Gospel, and to tell to others of his own experience of it, but also literally to pass on the Book, itself. You may possibly make a mistake as to your explanation of it, but you will make no mistake if you give away the Book, itself, and pray the Spirit of God, Himself, to explain it to the reader. Money should be spent by each one of us in scattering Bibles. With Testaments at a penny, who would not give Testaments away? With Bibles so cheap as they are, and withal so beautiful to look upon, many of them, who would not think it a good investment frequently to give to the young, to your relatives, to your friends, a copy of the Book? Suit the size of the copy to the person and so give that your present will be valued. What better marriage gift than a family Bible? What better present for an aged person than one of the large-print Bibles? Oh, what gladness you might give to many a humble cottager by the present of such a Book! I have seen them with their old thumbed Bibles, trying to read them when they have strained their eyes and I have pitied them. We who are getting old know the luxury of a fine large print! You who have the means should take care that there is not an elderly person who, for lack of large type, is unable to read the Word of God! I hope that few houses are without a copy of the Word of God—but while I hope so, I have often had my hopes very rudely dashed to the ground by discoveries of people who possess no Bible at all!

I also fear that millions who possess copies of the Word of God, never think of reading them! I have been at night, not far from here, in the houses of persons thought to be respectable—and there has been death very near and I have said, “Bring me the Bible, that I may read a passage of Scripture.” And they have hunted high and low and none has been found! This was not for lack of means to buy, but for lack of care to have! It is for us, at any rate, to endeavor liberally to scatter copies of the Word of God.

You are doing this when you help the man who spends his life in the work of translation. How can there be Bibles to give away in foreign languages until the Book has been translated into them? The scholar must live while he has the work of translation to do. Subscriptions given to the Bible Society are a handing over of the Scriptures to tribes that sit in darkness—who by this means shall see a great light.

If you cannot give away Bibles, I believe you do a good work when you sell them, or give money to help to produce them cheaply. If you cannot afford a whole Bible, something is done when a portion is given away, or a Gospel is left in a cottage. You can never tell what may come of a single portion of the Word of Gold—yes, of a leaf of it! Instead of regretting, as I have heard some do, that Bibles are sometimes sold for waste paper, and goods are done up in them, I am glad that it should be so! I admire the enterprise of Andrew Fuller, and some others long ago, who printed

hymns upon papers which were to be used in the sale of cottons and other small wares. They gave those papers to tradesmen that they might do their goods up in them. So long as the Truth of God does but travel, it does not matter how. If you can place the Bible where men may read it, who knows what may result? I knew a friend who, in purchasing his tobacco, found it done up in a passage of the Word of God—and by the perusal of that portion became a converted man! Let us not be afraid of what will become of the Book, for it is quite able to take care of itself—only let us imitate Hilkiyah and Shaphan and Josiah, and make it known wherever we have the opportunity! Have you bread to eat while the multitudes are dying of hunger in the streets, and will you eat your morsel alone? Then shame on you! Is the plague mowing down its thousands, and have you medicine that can stop the disease, and do you conceal the recipe and hide the remedy in your own chest? Then shame on you! Do you see millions going down to Hell and have you the good news of how they may escape that place of misery and enter into Glory? And will you not tell it, or will you not hand it on in the form of the Book? Then shame upon you! How is he a Christian who has no sympathy with the Bible Society? How is he a Christian who, in some shape or other, does not spread this matchless Word?

III. And now, lastly, I want to call your attention to the best thing of the whole and that is, notice THE IMPORTANT INFLUENCE OF THIS BOOK WHEN IT WAS READ.

We find that as soon as the king heard the words of the Law, *he tore his clothes*. First of all, he read it. The Book has no value if it is not read. Nowadays, we do not so much need Bibles as Bible-readers. Are any of you in that condition—that you would not be without a Bible in your house—and yet you never read it? Do you treat this Book as a fetish? Do you reverence words which you do not care to read? Is there some kind of witchcraft about paper and binding in a certain form? Do you think it a very pious thing to put a big Bible under your arm and march to a place of worship with it, and yet never read it? Oh, fall not into such folly! It is the reader and the one who understands the Word who gets the blessing from it! This Book is like a nut—you must crack the nut by reading and meditation—and so get the kernel, or it will not feed your soul!

Now, the first result of this Book upon the king was that he tore his clothes. How many here present, if they would but read the Word and if the Holy Spirit would bless it to them, would have to tear their hearts, if not their garments? You, my Friend, if you are not born-again, if you are not a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, are in such a condition that if you knew your danger, the joints of your loins would be loosened and for fearful astonishment you would be ready to fall to the ground! You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, but do not know it! You lie under the wrath of God! The curse of the Law is upon you and you do not know it—and all for lack of reading and believing what this Book would tell you—would tell you most assuredly and Infallibly! I fear

there is never a congregation without a considerable number who have need to read this Book, if for nothing else, in order that they might know their real state. There is a prayer which I often pray and I venture to commend it to many here. I pray, "Lord, let me always know the worst of my case." I cannot bear the idea of being self-deceived, of fancying that I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing when, in God's sight, I am naked, poor and miserable! Read your Bibles, that you may be honest with yourselves—that you may not deceive by thinking that you are something when you are nothing! That is the first effect of the Word. "Oh," you say, "it would make me miserable even to read it." Very likely it would, but by such misery you would come to sure and healthful happiness. By such a disturbance you would come to a lasting and acceptable peace.

After the king had tore his garments, *he then began to enquire after the God who had sent this Book*. Now, notice this. If any of you have never done this, pray that you may read the Book—yes, read the more terrible parts of it as well as the more cheering portions—in such a way that, having read it, you may seek this God who thus speaks to you in loving faithfulness. Endeavor to learn of Him how you may be saved. Labor to know Him *personally*, for it is written, "Acquaint now yourself with God and be at peace." It is of no use to be acquainted with the Scriptures if you are not acquainted with God! You may read the Scriptures till you perish unless you see God in the glass of Scripture, for it is to Him that you must come! A personal Christ must have personal dealings with a personal sinner, or else there will be no personal salvation. And the value of the Book lies mainly in this—that it does not let you stop at itself, but it points as with a finger of light to the Cross, and with a still small voice it whispers, "There your hope lies. Look there!" The Lord Jesus takes up the cry of the Book and utters that gracious command, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." O that you would look and live! Scatter the Bible, Christian people, in order that it may be like a sharp two-edged sword to kill self-righteousness and that it may also be a finger of love to point sinners to the Cross of Christ!

After this happened and Josiah began to understand the Book, *he entered upon a reformation*. I will not say how many things in England need reformation, but certainly we need it in a great many forms—ecclesiastical, doctrinal, social, moral and political. The Bible is the greatest of reformers. You thought, perhaps, I should have applied that term to Luther, or Calvin, or Zwingli—but this is the reformer that reformed Luther! This is the teacher that instructed Calvin! This is the Prophet that fired the heart of Zwingli! While this Book is extant, error will always be in danger of overthrow. An open Bible, and men may quibble and criticize, and invent new doctrines if they please—but this is the Rock on which they will split. As God lives, His Truth must live! And all that is of man's imagining and scheming, and that comes not out of this Book shall be broken to pieces! The grass withers, but the Word abides.

“Whoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” If you seek to have the social fabric purged of the leprosy which now eats into its very walls, scatter this Book! If you want to uplift the fallen and to purify the defiled, scatter this Book that men may be cleansed by it! If you want to see the Church of God made one and her various dividing errors put away, scatter this Book! If you desire to see a blessed unity in the Truth, scatter this Book! If you would dispense a perfect blessing, scatter the Bible, for all good lies here! We need no novel teachings to restore the Glory of the Church—we only need to come back to the purity of Scripture! That great Reformation which broke down all the idols in Judah and Israel came of the discovery of this Book! And there remains for us at this day no better means of reform and revival! God send to England this choice mercy, that it may become a Bible-reading nation, a Bible-loving nation, a Bible-obeying nation—and that shall be the best thing that can happen to our native land. God grant it!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CHRONICLES 34:14-33.**

Verse 14, 15. *And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found a Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.* This was a very remarkable find. Of all the discoveries that they might have made, they could have discovered nothing that would work so much good to all the people as this “Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses.”

16-19. *And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to your servant, they do it. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.* Such was his horror upon discovering how they had all sinned and how many terrible judgments were to be inflicted upon them because of all that long time of sin, that he tore his clothes.

20, 21. *And the king commanded Hilkiyah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king’s, saying, Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found.* Oh, that all who read God’s Book now would do as young Josiah did! If there is any difficulty in a book, the short way to get to understand it is to enquire of the author. And, surely, never is there greater wisdom than having read any of the deep mysteries or solemn threats in this Volume and feeling ourselves staggered by them, we enquire of the

Lord concerning them! I believe that there is many a puzzling passage in the Bible on purpose that we may be driven to enquire of the Lord about it. If the Book were all so easy of understanding that at the first reading of it, we could comprehend all its meaning, we might, perhaps, stay away from God—but He has purposely given us many dark sentences and made the sense to be somewhat obscure in order that we may wait upon His enlightening Spirit and so obtain instruction, for the Spirit of God is more useful to us even than the Word itself is! Great as the blessing of the Book is, the blessing of the living Spirit is still greater and anything is good that drives us to Him. That which had influenced the mind of Josiah was the terror of the Book.

21-28. *For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. And Hilkiyah, and they that the king had appointed went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe, (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college), and they spoke to her to that effect. And she answered them, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Tell you the man that sent you to me, Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall you say unto him, Thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which you have heard, because your heart was tender, and you did humble yourself before God, when you heard His words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbled yourself before Me, and did tear your clothes, and weep before Me, I have even heard you, also, says the LORD, Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, neither shall your eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.* When God selects an instrument for His own service, how well He tunes it for the use to which it is to be put! Here is a woman, a married woman, and she is selected to be the Lord's Prophetess to the king—but never has any man spoken more bravely than she did. Her opening words show a holy courage which is lifted above all fear of men—"Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Tell you the man that sent you to me," for before God kings are only men and though Huldah was only a subject of Josiah, see with what real dignity God's ordination had invested her. Josiah was not to succeed in the reformation of Israel. He was true and sincere, but the people were steeped in hypocrisy, formality and idolatry—and they did not go with the king in all his root and branch reforms. They still clung in their hearts to their idols and, therefore, they must be destroyed and the nation must be carried

away captive. It was, however, a very singular promise that God gave to Josiah—"I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace." Yet he was mortally wounded in battle, so how could that promise be fulfilled? You know how it could be! However we may die—if sword or plague or fire consume the saints among the rest of mankind—their very deaths and graves are blessed! There was no fighting about Josiah's grave—he was buried in peace. Pharaoh-Necho had killed him, but he did not destroy the land—and Josiah was allowed to be buried amid the great lamentations of a people who only began fully to appreciate him when he was taken away from them!

29, 30. *Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.* That was a grand Bible-reading, with a king for reader and all his princes and all his people gathered to listen to the Word of God! What could he have said better, had he been the greatest of orators? To read out of this blessed Book must surely be to the edification of the hearers.

31-33. *And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the Covenant which are written in this Book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the Covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their father.*

—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.**

SELF-HUMBLING

NO. 748

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place, and against the inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard you, says the Lord.”
2 Chronicles 34:27.***

JOSIAH was very earnestly engaged in a devout work for God—he was cleansing, beautifying, and repairing the Temple at Jerusalem. While this was being done, a copy of the Book of the Law being found, it was carried to the king, and the king at once diligently perused it. While reading it he discovered certain terrible penalties threatened to idolaters and other offenders, and knowing that his subjects had for successive years been guilty of the offenses thus condemned, he felt persuaded that the righteous judgments of God would come upon them. Greatly alarmed, though himself personally innocent of the guilt, he tore his clothes, wept, and humbled himself before the Most High.

Now, it seemed a strange thing, did it not, that so good a man, personally clear from blame, engaged in one of the holiest of works with a sincere heart devoting himself to the cause of his God, should meet with so sad and depressive a discovery just in the very midst of his prosperous labors? Was there not another time that the Law could have been sent to him with its condemning power? Were there not other offenders far more grossly erring than he who might have been humbled? Why need this king, with his large, royal, tender heart all consecrated to God, to be set a weeping and to be made to go softly in the bitterness of his soul just in the very moment of enthusiastic and successful labor?

I take it that the reason was this—God had much love towards Josiah, and, having honored him to rebuild the Temple, He knew the natural tendency of the human heart to pride, and therefore, with a holy jealousy for one whom He loved so well, He sent him this discovery of the Book of the Law to keep him humble at the time when otherwise he might have been exposed to peril by the lifting up of his heart. You remember, beloved Friends, the case of Hezekiah, when God raised him up from the sick bed. It is said he rendered not recompense to God according to the benefit received, for his heart was lifted up within him. And then God sent him a message by the Prophet to tell him that the treasures of his house should be carried away into Babylon and his sons should be captives to serve the

king of Babylon. Thus the Lord administered a check *after* the sin had broken out.

But in the case before us, the Lord preferred a *preventive* to a cure, and sent a check *before* the mischief had occurred, and so the holy worker became also the humble penitent—and there was blended in the life of Josiah, like the blending of the drops of rain with the gleams of sunlight—a fair rainbow of many virtues. For you see him toiling for his Lord with all his might and yet bowing himself in dust and ashes, as an humble suppliant before the Throne of heavenly Grace. Learn from this that you and I, in the midst of a career of success from God, when our heart is most pure and most right, must not therefore expect that all things will go smoothly, but may rather, for that very reason, expect to experience humiliating circumstances.

Like Paul, when favored with an abundance of revelations, we may expect a “thorn in the flesh,” lest we should be exalted above measure. Disclosures of our own weakness and sinfulness are often made to us at the very time when God is honoring us most. In order that our vessel may be able to endure a strong and fair wind of Divine favor, the Lord in infinite wisdom causes us to be ballasted with grief or trial. This morning I cannot enter into the whole of my text, but I shall ask your attention to Josiah’s humbling himself. In this matter we shall note, first, the acceptable act. Secondly, the powerful reasons which exist for our imitating it. And, thirdly, the encouraging results which followed—some of them are clear in his case, and others we may expect in our own.

I. First, we have to speak upon THE ACCEPTABLE ACT which Josiah performed. I say an *act*, not a Grace or a state. It is not said that Josiah was humble. He was so, or he would not have trembled at God’s Word. All Graces are in all Christians in a measure. In every Christian there is the germ of every virtue. Just as in every well-formed child there is every muscle and sinew, and nerve and bone. Although all are far from being developed, yet they are there. So in each Christian there exists humility, with all the kindred Graces, though it is as yet in some scarcely perceptible, and in others is far removed from perfection.

Josiah certainly possessed the Grace of humility. It is not said that his soul was in a state of habitual humility, although he ought to have been. We ought always to be, in a certain sense, in the valley of humiliation. Pride is never to be excused in the Believer. There is never a moment when we may safely be lifted up. Always lowly should we be in our own esteem. He that thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, deceives himself. And as we are always nothing in ourselves, it would be well for us to know and to feel this, and not to be self-deceived or lay a flattering unction to our hearts. What is mentioned in the text is an *act*, not a Grace, not a state, but an act. We have before us the Grace of humility in Josiah, *acting* after its own nature to produce the state of humility in his soul.

He humbled *himself*, that is, he set to work to cure himself of any remaining pride, and to educate in himself the humility which the Grace of God had worked in him. He humbled himself. He confessed his share in

the sin which God condemned. He acknowledged on his own part the justice of God in threatening such punishments. He stripped himself of his royal array. He made no mention of services which he had rendered to God in the Temple. He mentioned not his own generosity in having given of his treasures to the decorations of the House of the Lord. He came as that poor publican is described as coming in our Lord's famous parable, not "daring to lift so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smiting upon his breast, and crying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

So that, Brethren, I want you, this morning, not so much to enquire whether you *have* humility, for I know that if you are Believers, humility is *somewhere* in your heart. I do not ask you whether you are in an humble state this morning—it may be you are not. But I want you to accompany me in an *act* of humiliation—in the bowing of your souls before the Lord—each man and each woman, according to the experience of each, bowing low and reverently before the majesty of the Most High that we may obtain from God the mercies which each of us may need.

1. Concerning this action, then, I have to mention, in the first place, that it was a *real* and personal act. The text says, "Because your heart was tender, and you did humble yourself." You did not *talk* about humbling yourself, but you *did* humble yourself. You did not bid others do it, but you did humble *yourself*. It became to you a personal matter of obligation, and you did not postpone that obligation, or look at it, and commend it, and say, "When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you." You did humble yourself, really, sincerely, truly, and in very deed—you did, in your own proper person, bow yourself to the very dust before the Most high."

Brethren, I fear lest the habit of preaching to you may lead me to forget my personal share in this and other holy exercises. I pray God it may not! And on the other hand it is possible that you may criticize the style in which I address you, and so may forget that my style is not the business in hand. We are now to have respect to a very solemn obligation of which our text reminds us. I pray you let us come honestly to the work, and may God's Holy Spirit help us, and may each one here be willing now to have it said of him, "You did humble yourself."

2. Observe, too, that as the work was real and personal, so it was voluntary. "You did humble yourself." It is not said that *God* humbled him, by which it is not implied that the Grace of God did not *assist* him, that the Spirit of God was not the *author* of his humility, but it is implied that God did not by any overt and open judgment of Providence cause Josiah to be humbled. Have you ever noticed the difference between being humble and being humbled? Many persons are humbled who are not humble at all. Pharaoh was humbled, oh, how humbled, when he saw that even the flies and lice could vanquish both himself and his men-at-arms!

How humbled was he when he found that the God of Heaven could send plague after plague upon him, and make the proud lips that said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?" cry, "Entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail!" He must have been hum-

bled, but he was *not* humble! And when the chill waters rolled over him in the Red Sea and he died with a proud spirit he had been humiliated to the last degree. Even so, God may humble some of us. He may take away our property, and we may be humbled by being poor. He may be pleased to strip us of that which is now the object of our boasting, and we may be humbled by its loss.

But the duty to which I call you this morning is that of humbling *yourself* before judgment comes to deal with you, as, mark you, it surely will unless you attend to the gracious precept, and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. We must all either break or bow. Let us bow cheerfully. "Let us kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and we perish from the way." It is a *voluntary* humiliation of soul which is inculcated by the example of Josiah, and may the Spirit of God make us willing in the day of His power, that we may willingly humble ourselves before God.

3. It was, moreover, a sincerely devout act on the part of Josiah. He humbled himself, we are told, "before God." It is true he did put on sackcloth and tear his clothes, and his humiliation was apparent to men, but the *soul* of his humbling was before God alone. It is vain to put on sackcloth and to bow your head like a bulrush before man, unless your heart abases itself before God. Outward mourning and fasting are *not* humiliation—neither does God care for them if the heart is absent. "Tear your hearts, and not your garments." Let your souls be humbled and your spirits contrite.

Dear Friends, we need more and more to walk in our religion before *God*. Away with that holiness which consists in respect to the forms and customs of society! Away with that religion which flaunts itself before the staring eye of a fellow mortal. We need that Divine Grace which has respect to the God who sees in secret! We need more and more, in fact, of *spiritual* worship, for they who worship God the Spirit must "worship Him in spirit and in truth." Your hymns are no songs of praise unless they are sung unto God! Your prayers are no prayers unless you seek the face of the God of Israel! And your humbling is nothing but another form of *pride* unless your souls have a reverent and deep respect unto the Lord.

4. Once again, the act on the part of Josiah was a very deep and thorough one. He did not *try* to humble himself, but he did it. This I gather from the repetition of the fact in the text. Where Inspiration mentions a thing twice, it is because God would have our notice drawn to it. It is written, "You did humble yourself before God." And again, "And humbled yourself before Me." It was not garment-tearing merely, it was heart-breaking! Josiah was *really* broken in heart. He did not struggle to get himself down where he should be—he was down—at the foot of the Mercy Seat he cast himself as a true broken-hearted penitent.

Brethren, it is an easy thing to say, "I would be humble," but to be humble *before God* is another thing. To *begin* the sacred work of humiliation before the Most High is no great thing. But to continue in it until at last you can say, "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O God"—this is a blessed work, and you need the assistance of the Spirit of God in it! We

are all, at certain times, conscious of our weakness, but we forget the humbling fact—our humility is like the morning cloud and the early dew which passes away. To have this inwrought into the spirit till the whole heart becomes thoroughly self-mortified and pride is excluded and shut out—this it is that we want—and this it is that will win the blessing.

Beloved Friends, let me say to you that the Grace of humility, of which I spoke in the first place, is exceedingly sweet before God, and where it does *not* exist, a man *cannot* humble himself. Let me also remark that the *state* of humility is much more blessed than the mere *act* of humiliation and should be the condition of every Christian at all times. We ought *always* to walk humbly before the Lord. But if we are not in the *state* of humility, we must exercise the *act* of humility in order to bring us into it.

We ought always to be clean but as we are not always so, through contact with this evil world, there must be a time for cleansing. So we ought to be always humble, but as we are not so, there must be a time for humbling ourselves. Now, let no man or woman in this place be exempt from the work before us, for here is a *king*, an eminent person, and yet he humbles himself! Sons of the earth, will not you do the same? Here is one engaged in the greatest of works, yet he humbles himself! Let no pastor, no minister, no elder, no deacon—let no earnest evangelist, let no successful laborer as a private Christian, fancy himself excused. Josiah bowed! Who *dares* stand erect?

Let each heart in its own place bow before the Most High. Here is one who was pure in his life. He feared God and died in the act of fulfilling his treaty with his eastern allies—defending his country against the tyrant Pharaoh-Necho—who sought to keep him from the battle by pretending to have been sent by God. He lived a saint, and died as a patriot king might wish to die, and yet he humbles himself before the Most High! O Friends, do not we perceive that this example demands of us immediate imitation? The Lord lead us into it.

II. Grant me your earnest attention while I give a few POWERFUL REASONS why we should perform the same act as this, which is recorded of Hezekiah.

1. My Brethren, reasons for humbling ourselves are more abundant than the time allowed me in which to urge them upon you. In the first place, a deep sense and clear sight of sin, its heinousness, and the punishment which it deserves should make us lie low before the Throne of God. We have sinned. We have erred and strayed from His ways like lost sheep—we who are now present. We have sinned as Christians. Alas that it should be so! Favored as we have been, we have yet been ungrateful—privileged beyond most we have not brought forth fruit in proportion. Who among us, though he may long have been engaged in the Christian warfare, will not blush when he looks back upon the past?

As for our days before we were regenerate, may God blot them out—may they be forgiven and forgotten. But since then, though we have not sinned as before, yet there has been this peculiar aggravation of our sins that we have sinned against light and against love—light which has really

penetrated our minds, and love which we have been able to recognize and in which we have rejoiced. Oh, the atrocity of the sin of a pardoned soul! An unpardoned sinner sins, to my mind, *cheaply*, compared with the sin of one of God's own elect ones, who has had communion with Christ and leaned his head upon Jesus' bosom.

Look Brethren, at David! Many will talk of his sin, but I pray you look at his *repentance* and hear his broken bones, as each one of them moans out its dolorous confession! Mark his tears as they fall upon the ground, and the deep sighs with which he accompanies the softened music of his harp! We have erred. Let us, therefore, seek the spirit of penitence. Look, again, at Peter! We speak much of Peter's denying his Master. Remember, it is written, "He wept bitterly." Have we no such offenses to weep over? Are there no denials of our Lord to be lamented with tears?

Think, Brethren, these sins of ours deserve nothing less than the hottest Hell! These sins of ours, before and after conversion, would consign us to the place of inextinguishable fire if it were not for the Sovereign mercy which has made us to differ, snatching us like brands from the burning! Is there no help here towards the work of soul-humbling? My Soul, bow down under a sense of your natural filthiness and worship your God!

2. Let us reflect upon another humbling subject—our origin and our end. Here are we, the offspring of a day! We are unclean things brought out of an unclean thing—children that are corrupters—the seed of evildoers! What are we at the best but mere animated earth? And before long we shall be brought into that lowly bed where the worms shall be under us, and the worms shall cover us! We shall become a puff of wind, a handful of brown dust—and shall we glory? We who sprang from nothing, and must go back to nothing, shall we boast in ourselves? O worm of the dust, know yourself, and cease from pride!

3. I would remind you also, my dear Brothers and Sisters, of that Sovereign Grace which has made us to differ. I frequently find that a sense of God's amazing love to me has a greater tendency to humble me than even a consciousness of my own guilt. Think, my Brethren, what you are by Grace! You were chosen of God according to His purpose—chosen, not for good in you, but chosen because He would choose you—because, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." You were "not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ."

You were so lost that nothing could save you but the sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son! Think of that! And, as Jesus stooped for you, bow yourselves in lowliness at His feet. You are now a child of God! A favorite of the skies, on the road to Glory—with a heritage beyond the black river which shall be yours when suns and moons have paled their waning light. You are to dwell forever near to God and to be like He! Surely the thoughts of such amazing goodness will make the vessel, laden so heavily with mercy, sink in the water even to its bulwarks! Surely you will feel that you

must bless and magnify God, because you are less than the least of all His mercies.

4. Further, let me ask you to think of the greatness of God. It is not in my power by words to bring before you that tremendous subject. But if I could put you in the position of Job, when he said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You," you would be certain to add with that Patriarch, "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—

***"Great God, how infinite are You!
What worthless worms are we!"***

5. Once more, think of the life and death of the Savior. See your Master taking a towel and washing His disciples' feet! And, follower of Christ, will you not humble yourself? No, see Him all His life long. Is not this sentence the compendium of His biography—"He humbled himself"? Was He not here on earth always stripping—taking off first one robe of honor and then another, till, naked, He was fastened to the Cross, and then emptied out His inmost self, pouring out the floods of His life-blood from His heart, and giving up all for us, till they laid Him penniless in a borrowed grave?—

***"His honor and His breath
Were taken both away,
Joined with the wicked in His death,
And made as vile as they."***

How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How then can we be proud? Stand, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, at the foot of the Cross and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed! See the crown of thorns! Mark still the relics of the spit on those blessed cheeks! Go round the Cross and mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills! See hands and feet given up to the rough iron and His whole self to mockery and scorn! See the bitterness, and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief showing themselves in His outward frame! Hear the shrill shriek, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that Cross, you have never seen it. If you are not humbled in the Presence of Jesus, you do not know Him.

I pray the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, and I know our position will no longer be that of the inflated, pompous man of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much, because much has been forgiven him. I would, however, warn the inexperienced Believer concerning this act of humbling—do not make mistakes about it. Do not mistake sham humility for *real* humility. There is a cant of humility which is infamous. People will say in prayer, "Your poor dust," and use all sorts of depreciating expressions when they are as proud as Lucifer! They will say before the Lord things concerning themselves which they are very far from believing, for from their manner and bearing it is clear that their estimate of themselves is far from being too low.

There are others who think that laziness is humility. They cry, "Oh, I could not do this! I could not do the other!" when they *might* do it, and *should* do it, and *ought* to do it, and *could* do it, God the Holy Spirit helping them. But they shirk every duty because they have a sense of inability, and they cover their idleness with the mantle of supposed humility. Moses was rebuked by God very strongly when he made excuses and would gladly have avoided going into the great work to which the Lord had called him. Let us not raise questions with our God when He calls us to labor, but let us say, "Here I am, send me." Do not fall into that miserable *counterfeit* humility, but like men, use all your strength for Jesus!

Again, do not mistake *unbelief* for humility. "I hope I am." "I trust I am," and expressions of that kind, savor far more of *distrust* of God than of humility of spirit, for the best form of humility is compatible with the highest degree of faith. In fact, that is *not* true faith, but spurious, which is not humble. And that is not genuine humility of the loveliest type which is not confident in God. Faith and humility should always walk together. Let the Grace in you be real Grace, and to that end *ask* the Spirit of God to work it in you.

Let me add, dear Friend, if you find it difficult to humble yourself before God, stand to it the more earnestly, for the more difficult it is, the more you need it. If your soul were humble it would easily humble itself, but because it is proud, it *needs* humbling. And for this reason it finds the duty irksome and displeasing to the flesh. Mortify your pride, my Brothers and Sisters! Let your souls be mortified on account of sin! And if you cannot yourself do it, you know where your strength lies—fly to your Master for strength and you shall have enabling Grace.

Again, let me say, in order to humble yourselves exercise all your faculties. Let your *memory* bring before you your past offenses. Let your *understanding* form a proper judgment of your position as a creature, as a *sinner*, and now as a dependent *servant*. Your understanding will greatly help you, for true humility is forming a just estimate of oneself—and to humble oneself is to bring oneself *down* to the place where one ought to be. Let your hopes and your fears, let your affections and your passions, let *all* the powers of your intellect and heart agree to this—that now before God you will humble yourself as Josiah did. I have given you the reasons. May God apply those reasons with power by His Holy Spirit!

III. Lastly, I have to encourage our friends to this duty by ENCOURAGING RESULTS. I think it was Bernard, or one of the preachers of the Middle Ages who said, "There is one thing to be said for humility, that it never can by any possibility do one harm." If a man goes through a door, and he has the habit of stooping his head, it may be the door is so high there is no need for stooping, but the stooping is no injury to him. But if the door should happen to be a low one, and he has the habit of holding up his head, he may come into sharp contact with the top of the door! True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in

every case. Whether it is prayer or praise, whether it is work or suffering, the salt of humility cannot be used in excess.

1. But there are positive advantages connected with it, for, first, humiliation will often avert judgment. How many times in the history of the Israelites, when they were given over to their enemies, their humbling themselves at once drove away the invaders and set them free from the scourge? Perhaps some of the most remarkable cases which I can quote are those of wicked men, for their cases show the power of humiliation with God where there is nothing else to work upon Him.

Rehoboam had set up a false worship, and “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” Therefore God was provoked with Rehoboam and with Judah, and Shishak, the king of Egypt, came up and ravaged Judea, and was about to capture Jerusalem. But we read that Rehoboam and Judah humbled themselves before God, and the Lord said that Shishak should not touch Jerusalem, and moreover the Lord visited the land with favor, and it is said, “also in Judah things went well.” This mercy was granted, not because of any good thing in Rehoboam or his people, but only because they *humbled* themselves.

A more remarkable case, still, is that of Ahab. Ahab had killed Naboth to obtain his vineyard. And when he entered that vineyard, stained with innocent blood, Elijah met him with the cutting question, “Have you killed, and also taken possession?” And Ahab’s proud and haughty spirit was cowed with fear of Elijah, and he cried, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” Elijah delivered the terrible sentence of God to him, that the whole of his household should die, and that Jezebel should be eaten by dogs in that very vineyard. Ahab could no longer, after hearing that sentence, keep up his bronze countenance. And we read, “And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.”

Then the Lord said unto Elijah, “Do you see how Ahab humbles himself before Me? Because he humbles himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days.” So that this basest of all men, this wicked Ahab, whose name stands infamous in the Chronicles of the Kings, yet obtained a blessing from God when he humbled himself! As for God’s people, when the Lord has been about to strike them, He has usually stayed His hands when they have humbled themselves. See the case of Hezekiah, which we have already mentioned. Hezekiah humbled himself, it is said, because of the pride of his heart, and the Lord said this evil should not be brought upon him in his day. And Josiah, in this case, also turned aside the sword of the Lord from the Israel of his own day because he humbled himself.

My dear Friends, you are under the paternal discipline of God and He will make you feel His chastening rod! But if you humble yourselves, you put the rod away. You know, with your own children, if you feel compelled to chasten, yet, when you see softness and tenderness of heart and a sweet readiness to confess the fault, it goes against your heart that the rod should be used, and you put it away, for humble sorrow is all that you

wanted to produce. And if the effect is there already, there is no need of further sternness. So the Lord turns away the chastisement from His people when they humble themselves.

2. Humiliation of soul always brings a positive blessing with it. The old philosophers were accustomed to assert, as a law of matter, "Nature abhors a vacuum." This old dictum is out of date nowadays, but it is still true *spiritually*. So, then, if you and I empty ourselves, depend upon it, God will fill us! Divine Grace seeks out and fills a vacuum. Make a vacuum by humility, and God will fill that vacuum by His love. He who desires sweet communion with Christ should remember the words of the Lord, "To this man will I look, even to Him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word."

"He has respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off." Stoop, my dear Friend, if you would climb to Heaven! Do we not say of Jesus, "He descended that He might ascend"? So must you! You must go downwards, that you may grow upwards, for the sweetest fellowship with Heaven is to be had by humble souls, and by them alone. I believe that God will deny no blessing to a thoroughly humbled spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven," with all its riches and treasures. The whole treasury of God shall be made over by deed of gift to the soul which is humble enough to be able to receive it without growing proud because of it.

3. Further, my dear Brethren, the act of humiliation will be very blessed to you and to me because it will improve our spiritual health. To humiliate yourself is as necessary in this wicked world as it is for traveler's through African jungles to take, every now and then, a draught of quinine. The bitterness of humility is a tonic to the spirit. I know of no man who is so courageous before his fellow man as he that bows before his God. My knee shall bend to God, and God alone. But if my knee never bends to God, you may depend upon it, it will soon be bending when I do not want it to do so—it will tremble before the face of *man*.

If you fear God with a deep and powerful fear, you shall fear nobody else. You should be able to say, before a fierce tyrant like Nebuchadnezzar, with the three holy children, "Be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." The fear of God is the death of every other fear. Like a mighty lion, it chases all other fears before it. Nothing makes a man so vigorous and strong, with the exception of faith, as humility! And even faith itself cannot be strong where humility is weak.

4. Once more, usefulness will be promoted by humility. There are some professors whom God cannot bless because they would grow intolerably proud if they were blessed. I heard a dear Brother say that he believed God blessed us all up to the full measure and extremity of what it was safe for Him to do, and I believe He does so. If you do not get a blessing, it is because it is not safe for you to have one! If our heavenly Father were to let you be successful in His holy war, you would run away with the crown

yourself—and meeting with an enemy you would fall a victim—and so you are kept low for your own safety.

When a man is sincerely humble, and never ventures so much as to touch a grain of the praise, there is scarcely any limit to what God will do for him. Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of Grace, and fits us to deal with our fellow men. Everybody gets as far as ever he can from a proud man. I confess, myself, I have a great pleasure in seeing proud men—when I can hardly discern them with a powerful telescope! Nearer than this would be far less agreeable. We mind not how near we come to gentle and meek spirits, for these are company for angels.

Proud spirits do not like to deal with great sinners. “Stand by, I am holier than you,” is not the language for a man who would be useful. What do you think, would a Pharisee make a city missionary? Look at the fine gentleman, bloated with self-importance! What a useful preacher he would make, would he not? Send him after the poor fallen girls at midnight meetings! Better send a peacock! “Stand by, I am holier than you.” Why the man who feels thus is out of place in the service of God—he is more fit to play lackey to the world’s vanities, than to talk of being a soldier of the Cross.

Just as the excess of pride disables, so an abundance of humility of spirit will fit you for any kind of Christian work to which the Holy Spirit may call you. Let us humble ourselves then, dear Friends, that God may exalt us in due time by giving us to see the result of our work. I know not how to plead any further, but I commend to the Holy Spirit for fulfillment. My deeply anxious desire for myself and for you, my Brothers and Sisters in the common faith, is that we may all be brought, like Josiah, to humble ourselves before God.

There is yet a word which I desire to speak to those who are not saved. I do not say to you, *begin* with humbling yourselves. Your hope lies in Jesus Christ. “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” That is the Gospel. Your salvation lies not in *you* but in Jesus. At the same time, an humble and a contrite spirit will be a very ready way of leading you to Christ, and therefore I beseech you, cultivate this spirit. There is a story narrated in the classic history of Augustus Caesar that a most troublesome pirate had destroyed many of the Roman vessels, and therefore Caesar, having hunted him in vain for some time, offered a reward of ten thousand talents for the pirate’s head.

Now the pirate, knowing the case to be hopeless, and perhaps somewhat relenting, came *himself* before Caesar and laying his head down before him in the dust, he said, “Ten thousand talents! I have brought the pirate’s head.” Caesar looked at him with astonishment, and said, “You have trusted the generosity of Caesar, and no man shall trust that in vain. You are pardoned. Here are the 10,000 talents, too.” Now, Sinner, I would advise you to follow his example. Shrewd and sensible was that—be you as wise. God will have your head of you, no, your *soul*—but go yourself with it, submit yourself!

After that evil May day in our English history when the apprentices had done so much mischief by destroying the foreigners' houses and burning them, in a riot, a commission sat to try them, and a number of them were summoned to the Guildhall. But when they appeared with ropes about their necks, confessing that they deserved to be hanged, a free pardon was accorded to very many of them. Come, poor Soul, the Lord will never swing you up if you will put the rope round your own neck. If you will bring your own head, He will never take it off your shoulders. Come just as you are, confess the wrong, and trust to the liberality of God in Jesus Christ and you shall not find Him condemning. You proud ones who are self-righteous will perish, but you who are humble, by trusting in Jesus, shall be saved!

Yonder is a sinking ship! The vessel is going down rapidly, and I see two men equally anxious for life. One of them puts on his garments, heavy with gold lace. He loads himself with jewels. He fills his pockets with his gold and his silver, and leaps into the sea. You know what will become of him! He has weighted himself for destruction. But here is another who takes off not only such jewelry as he may have upon him, but he strips himself even to his last rag and *then* casts himself naked into the sea. If any man can swim, it is he.

So you do the same, poor Soul! If you have a rag of self-righteousness, off with it! If you have anything whatever of your own to depend upon, off with it! And if any man can swim in the sea of Divine Love, you are the man! And, let me add, a naked spirit was never drowned there. Lay hold on Jesus with nothing of your own in your hands, and "you shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck you out of His hands." May God bless these words to us all for His love's sake. Amen.

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CHEER UP, MY COMRADES!

NO. 1513

[Read January 1, 1880.]

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

***“And Josiah set the priests in their charges and encouraged them
to the service of the house of the Lord”
2 Chronicles 35:2.***

JOSIAH, as you remember, in the early part of his reign set his face against the idolatries that prevailed, to root them out of the land. He then bent his thoughts upon repairing and beautifying the Temple. After that it was his heart's aim to restore the sacred services, to observe the solemn feasts and to revive the worship of God after the due order, according to the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. Our text tells us something of the method with which he went to work and it may well serve us as a model. The first thing is to get every man into his proper place and the next thing is for every man to have a good spirit in his present place so as to occupy it worthily.

I will suppose, dear Friends, that in the Providence of God you are in your place and that by the direction of God's Spirit you have also sought and found the precise form of usefulness in which you ought to exercise yourself. Tonight it shall not be my business to arrange you, but assuming that it is well for you to stay where you are, my goal shall be to encourage you to do your work for your Lord without being cast down. I am hardly going to preach so much as to talk to different persons who are discouraged in the work of the Lord, that we may rouse them up, rally them round us and encourage them to keep rank.

I. And, first, I would speak a little to THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY CAN DO NOTHING. They will tell me that in such a sermon not a sentence can concern them. If I am to encourage men to the service of the house of the Lord, it will be in vain for them, as they can do nothing at all. Well, dear Friends, you must not take that for granted! You must make quite sure that you cannot do anything before I may venture to speak to you as if it were a matter of fact, for sometimes there is a need of a way because there is a lack of will.

Though I do not go so far as to allege that this is *your* case, we know too well that “cannot” often does mean “will not”—and not to have triumphed may mean that you have not tried. You have been so discouraged that you have excused yourself for inaction and your inaction has grown into indolence. If a man, under the notion that he could not lift his right hand, constantly kept it still, I should not wonder if, after weeks and months, it would become a matter of *fact* that he had not the power to use it! It might actually stiffen for no reason but because he had not moved it. Do you not think that, before your muscles get rigid, it would be well to exercise them by attempting some kind of service?

Especially you younger folks—if you do not work for the Lord almost as soon as you are converted, it will be very difficult, afterwards, to make you take to it. Aptitude, I have often noticed, comes with *employment* and through negligence and sloth people become enervated and helpless. You say that you cannot move your arm and so you do not move it. Take heed, for by-and-by your pretense may become the parent of real powerlessness.

But I will take what you have said as being true. You are ill. The vigor you felt in the bright days of health fails you now. You have to suffer pain, weariness and exhaustion. You are often detained at home and home seems, now, a gloomy hospital all day long, rather than a genial hostelry when evening shadows fall. Little indeed, therefore, can you do—so little that you are apt to reckon it as nothing at all. The thought is a burden to you. You wish you could serve the Lord. How constantly you have dreamed of the pleasure since you have been denied the privilege! How willing your feet would be to run! How ready your hands would be to labor! How glad would your tongue be to testify!

You envy those who are able and you would gladly emulate and excel them. Not, indeed, that you harbor ill-will against them, but you devoutly wish that you could do some personal service in the cause of your Master. Now, I want to encourage you, first, by reminding you that the Law of the Son of David is the same as the Law of David, himself, and you know the Law of David about those that went to the battle. There were some that were lame and some that were otherwise incapable of action and he left them with the baggage. “There,” he said, “you are very weary and ill—stay in the camp—take care of the tents and the ammunition while we go and fight.”

Now, it happened, once, that the men that went to fight claimed all the spoil. They said, “These people have done nothing! They have been lying in the trenches—they shall not carry off a share of the booty.” But King David, then and there, made a law that they should share and share *equally*—those that were in the trenches and those that engaged in the fray. “As his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that carries by the stuff—they shall share alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel.” Nor is the Law of the Son of David less gracious. If by sickness you are detained at home—if for any other reason, such as age or infirmity, you are not able to enter into actual service—yet if you are a true soldier and would fight if you could and your heart is in it, you shall share even with the best and bravest of those who, clad in the panoply of God, encounter and grapple with the adversary!

And, Brothers and Sisters, you have no reason to envy, though you may admire to your heart’s content, all who are diligent and successful in the service of Christ! Let me remind you of a Law of the kingdom of Heaven with which you are all familiar—“He that receives a Prophet in the name of a Prophet shall receive a Prophet’s reward.” In truth, it is a splendid appointment to be a servant of the Lord. David thought so, for you often read, at the commencement of his Psalms—“A prayer of David, the servant of God,” though you never read, “A prayer of David, the king of

Israel,” for he thought more of being enrolled a *servant* of God than of being entitled a king of Israel!

Health and strength, ability and opportunity to fulfill a mission for the Master are much to be desired, but these are not always to be taken as reliable evidence of personal *salvation*. A man may preach admirably and he may work marvels in the Church and, yet, he may not be a partaker of saving Grace. Therefore, when the disciples came back from preaching and said, “Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Your name,” the Lord said, “Nevertheless, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” Judas was among them! Judas cast out devils! Judas preached the Gospel and yet Judas was a son of perdition and is lost forever. Because you cannot do much you must not infer that, therefore, you are not saved, for if you were to be among the chief of Christian workers it would not prove that you were certainly a child of God.

Do not fret, then, because you are shut out from the cheerful activities in which others share, for, as long as your name is written in Heaven and your heart truly follows after the Lord, you shall have an abundant recompense at the Last Great Day, even though here you are doomed to be a sufferer rather than a worker! But to me, it seems more than possible that some of you, dear Friends, whose minds are tinged with melancholy, have painted your own lot in deeper shades than the justice of the case deserves. Is your life, indeed, a dull routine, which, for lack of busy change and lively enterprise, leaves no record behind? I do not think so! “The rich relics of a well-spent hour” do sometimes pour around your path a stream of light that cheers your eyes, though it may escape your notice.

Are you patient under your sufferings? Do you try to keep the flesh in subjection, to govern your spirit, to refrain from murmuring and to foster cheerfulness? That, my Friend, is doing a great deal! I am sure that the holy serenity of a suffering child of God is one of the best sermons that can ever be preached in a family. A sick saint has often been more serviceable in a house than the most eloquent Divine could have been. They see how sweetly you submit to the Divine will, how patiently you can bear painful operations, how the Lord gives you songs in the night. Why, you are greatly useful! I have sometimes been called to visit bedridden persons who have been unable to rise for many, many years and it has been within my knowledge that their influence has extended over whole parishes! They have been known as poor pious women or as experienced Christian men and many have gone to visit them.

Christian ministers have said that they derived more benefit from sitting half-an-hour talking to poor old Betsy than they did from all the books in their library and yet Betsy said that she was doing nothing! Look at your case in that light and you will see that you *can* praise God upon your bed and make your chamber to be as vocal for God as this pulpit ever can be! Besides, dear Friends, do you not think we frequently limit our estimate of serving God to the public exercises of the sanctuary and forget the strong claims that our Lord has upon our private fidelity and obedience? You say, “I cannot serve God,” when you cannot teach in the school or preach in the pulpit—when you are unable to sit on a committee

or speak on a platform—as if these were the *only* forms of service to be taken into account!

Do you not think that a mother nursing her baby is serving God? Do you not think that men and women going about their daily toil with patient industry, discharging the duties of domestic life, are serving God? If you think rightly, you will understand that they are. The servant sweeping the room; the mistress preparing the meal; the workman driving a nail; the merchant casting up his ledger ought to do all in the service of God. Though, of course, it is very desirable that we should each and all have some definitely *religious* work before us, yet it is much better that we should hallow our common handicraft and make our ordinary work chime with the melodies of a soul attuned for Heaven! Let true religion be our *life* and then our life will be true religion! That is how it ought to be. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.”

So, then, let the stream of your common life, as it flows on obscure, unobserved, be holy and courageous—and you will find that while “they also serve who only stand and wait”—you shall not be neglected or overlooked who simply sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to His Words when you can do no more. This is service done for Him which He can appreciate! Know, too, my dear Sister, that by your sorrows the Lord has drawn out your sympathies. You, my dear Brother, know that by the discipline which has chastened you, you have learned to be a comforter. Do you say, then, that you cannot do anything? I know a few secrets about you that you forget. You do not reckon yourself up as we reckon you. Did you not try to cheer a poor neighbor the other day by telling of the Lord’s goodness to you when *you* were very sick?

Look at those sacred tears falling from your eyes for a fellow creature’s pain. Is it not your habit, poor sufferer as you are, to let drop just a few words for your Master to others in the same condition whenever you can? You tell me that you cannot do anything? Why, dear Hearts, the refreshing of God’s saints is one of the highest works in which anyone can be occupied! God will send Prophets to His servants at times when they need to be *rebuked*. If He wants to comfort them, He generally sends an angel, for that is angel’s work!

Jesus Christ Himself, we read, had angels sent to minister to Him. When? Was it not in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He was bowed down with sorrow? Comforting is not ordinary work—it is a kind of angelic work. “There appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him.” A Prophet was sent to warn the Israelites of their sin, but when a Gideon was to be encouraged to go and fight for his country, it was the Angel of the Lord that came to him. So I gather that comforting work is angel’s work. You, dear kind Christian men and women, who think that you are not able to do anything but to console with cheery words some souls cast down and sorely dismayed—you are fulfilling a most blessed office and doing work which many ministers find it difficult to perform.

I have known some who have never known suffering or ill-health and when they try to comfort God’s weary people, they are dreadfully awkward over it. They are like elephants picking up pins—they can do it, but it is

only with an agonizing effort. God's tried people comfort each other with love—they take to the work as a fish to water. They understand the art of speaking a word in season to him that is weary and when this is the case, they may not complain that they are doing nothing!

And yet, Beloved, you who thought that you did nothing and now perceive that you are really useful, will, I hope, perceive that there is still a wider region into which you may advance. Breathe tonight the prayer of Jabez, who was more honorable than his brethren, because he was the child of his mother's sorrow. This was the prayer—"Oh that You would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coast"! Ask God to open up to you a larger region of usefulness and He will do it!

II. Now let me address a few words to another class of workers WHO THINK THAT THEY ARE LAID ASIDE. "Dear Sir," says one, "I wish you would encourage me. I used to be useful, once. At least I was recognized as one of a band of men who worked together right heartily. But since I have changed my residence I am unknown in the neighborhood where I am living and I seem to have dropped out of the ranks. I have done little or nothing lately and I feel uneasy about it. I wish that I could get to work."

My dear Brother, I hope you will. But do not waste five minutes in thinking it over. These times need so much Christian effort that when a man asks me, "How shall I do work for Christ"? I am accustomed to say, "Go and do it." "But what is the way to do it?" Start at once. Get at it, my Brother! Do not be out of harness a minute. But suppose that you are obliged to stop a while—do not let your interest in the cause of our Lord and Master decline! Some of the best of God's workers have been laid aside for long periods. Moses was 40 years in the desert doing nothing. A greater than He, our blessed Savior, Himself, was 30 years—I will not say doing *nothing*, but certainly doing no public work.

When you are in a retired and inactive position, be preparing for the time when God brings you out again. If you are put away on the shelf, do not rust there, but pray the Master to brighten you up so that when He comes to use you again, you may be fully fitted for the work which He has in hand for you. While you must be laid aside, I want you to do this—pray for others that are at work. Help them. Encourage them. Do not get into that peevish, miserable frame of mind which grudges and undervalues other men's works. Be not like the dog in the manger!

Some people, when they cannot do anything, themselves, do not like anybody else to be diligent and laborious. Say, "If I cannot help, I will never hinder, but I will cheer my Brothers and Sisters." Spend your time in prayer that you may be fit for the Master's use and, meanwhile, be prompt in helping others. You remember that at the siege of Gibraltar, when the fleet surrounded it and determined to storm the old rock, the governor fired red-hot shot down upon the men of war. The enemy did not at all admire the governor's warm reception! Think about how it was done. Here were gunners on the ramparts firing away and every man in the garrison would have liked to do the same. What did those do who could not serve a gun? Why, they heated the shot—and that is what you must do.

Generally I am the master gunner here—heat my shot for me, if you will. Keep the furnace going, so that when we do fire off a sermon it may be red-hot through your earnest prayers! When you see your friends sitting in the Sunday school, or standing out in the street working for God, if you cannot join them, yet say, “Never mind. I will heat the shot for them. My prayers shall not be lacking, if I can contribute nothing else.” That is counsel for you who are, for a while, laid on the shelf.

III. Others there are who are much discouraged because THEY HAVE BUT SMALL TALENT. “Oh,” they say, “I wish I could serve Jesus Christ like Paul, or like Whitefield—that I could range the country, through, proclaiming His dear name and winning thousands of converts. But I am slow of speech and dull of thought and what I attempt produces little or no effect.” Well, Brother, mind that you do what you can. Do you not remember the parable of the men who had talents entrusted to them? I do not want to lay undue stress upon the fact that it was the man who had one talent who buried it. Yet why is he represented as doing so? I think it was not because the men of two and five talents do not sometimes bury theirs, but because the temptation lies most with the one-talent people.

They say, “What can *I* do? What is the use of *me*? I may be excused.” That is the temptation. Brothers and Sisters, do not be entangled in that snare! If your Lord has only given you one talent, He does not expect you to make the same interest upon it as the man does with five. But He still expects His interest and, therefore, do not wrap your talent in a napkin. It is but with strength imparted by His Holy Spirit that *any* of us can serve Him! We have nothing to consecrate to Him but the gift we have first received from Him! You are weak. You feel it. But what does your God say to you? “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” He can make you useful though you have no extraordinary endowments!

Grapeshot may do great execution, though it cannot compare with a grenade or bomb shell. A sinner may be brought to Christ by the simple earnestness of a peasant or an artisan without calling in the aid of a professor’s learning or a preacher’s eloquence! God can bless you far above what you think to be your capacity, for it is not a question of *your* ability but of His aid! You have no self-reliance, you tell me. Then take refuge in God, I entreat you, for you evidently need more of the Divine succor. Go and get it—it is to be had. He girds the weak with strength. “The young men shall faint and be weary, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” Why, I think you are more likely to do good than if you had five talents, for now you will *pray* more and you will *depend* more upon God than you would have done if you had possessed strength of your own!

One other word. As you are not enriched with many talents, mind you economize those you have. Do you know how merchants and tradesmen who have only a small capital in business manage to compete with those who have larger means? They try to turn their money over every day. The one who sells fruit from a cart cannot afford to deal out his goods to gentlemen who will pay him in three months. Not he. He must get his money at the cart and then go and buy another stock tomorrow morning and turn it over or else he could not make a living with so small a capital. If

you have only nine pence, make it “nimble” and you will get as much profit out of a nimble nine pence as another out of a lazy crown!

Activity often makes up for lack of ability. If you cannot get force by the weight of the ball, get it by the velocity with which it travels. A little man with one talent all ablaze may become a perfect nuisance to the devil and a champion for Christ! As for that great Divine with his five talents, who marches on so sleepily, Satan can always overmatch him and win the day. If you can but turn over your one talent again and again, in the name of God, you may achieve great wonders! And so I would encourage you in the work of the Lord.

IV. With workers WHO ARE UNDER GREAT DIFFICULTIES I would now have a word. I have known the day when perplexities pleased me, dilemmas afforded me delight and instead of declining a difficult task I rather liked it. Even now I enjoy puzzling over a problem and attempting what others decline. Nothing good in this world can be effected without difficulty. The biggest diamonds lie under heavy stones which sluggards cannot turn over. That which is easy to do is hardly worth doing. In the face of difficulty the man of ardent, persevering spirit braces up his nerves, sharpens his wits and brings all his powers into play to achieve an objective that will reward His efforts.

Have you great difficulties, dear Friend? You are not the first worker for God who has had difficulties to encounter. Let us go back to Moses. He was to bring Israel out of Egypt, but his path did not appear very plain. He must go before Pharaoh and issue God’s command. Pharaoh looked him through when he said, “Let My people go.” The haughty monarch was greatly surprised to hear anybody, especially a Hebrew, talk like that and so he bade him be gone. But Moses returns with, “Thus says the Lord, Let My people go” and his courage was not even, then, crowned with immediate success. There must be plague upon plague, plague upon plague, till at last proud Pharaoh’s heart was broken, the Israelites were saved from the hand of him that hated them and Egypt was glad when they departed!

This, however, was but the beginning of the mission of Moses. His was a *life* of difficulty—the meekest man, but the most provoked—and until he got to the top of Pisgah and his gracious Master kissed away his soul, the Prophet of Horeb was never done with difficulties. Any good thing, I say, especially any good thing done for God, must be surrounded with difficulties and resisted by adversaries. Look at Nehemiah and Ezra and Zerubabel and those that built Jerusalem the second time. These good men worked zealously, but Sanballat and Tobiah were jeering and jesting and trying to tear down the wall. If you build a city without difficulty, it is not Jerusalem. Be sure of that.

As soon as ever you begin working for God, you will find a great power working against you. If you encounter opposition, take it as a good sign! When our young men go to a provincial town to preach and I want to know how they are getting on, after listening to their story, I ask, “Has somebody slandered you yet? Do the newspapers denounce you as fools?” If they say, “No,” I conclude that they are not doing much. If Christ’s cause is prospering, the world will reproach the soul-winner! If you do damage to the devil’s kingdom, he will roar at you! Should your course be

smooth, it is because he says, "There is nothing to disturb me in that man's monotonous talk. I need not let fly the fiery darts of calumny at him—he is a chip in the porridge, I will leave him alone."

Such a man generally goes through life very comfortably. People say, "He is a quiet, inoffensive sort of man." We do not need such soldiers in the service of Christ! "What a disagreeable person!" said a king, once, of an officer whose sword rattled on the floor. "That sword of his is most offensive." "Sire," said the officer, "that is exactly what your Majesty's enemies think." When ungodly persons say that we are troublesome, we are not broken-hearted at being out of their good graces. If the king's enemies think us troublesome, we reckon it to be high praise! When you, my dear Brother, meet with opposition, encounter it with prayer. Exercise more faith.

Antagonists ought never to hinder your going forward in the cause of Christ. Diamond must cut diamond. There is nothing so hard in this world but you can cut it with something harder. If you ask God to steel your soul up to the conquering point and to make your resolution like an adamant stone, you can cut your way through an alp of diamond in the service of your Lord and Master! Let me inspire you in the face of assailants. The forces ranged against you might be stumbling blocks to *fools*, but they shall only prove a stimulus to men! One day your honor shall be the greater and your reward shall be the higher because of these adverse elements. Therefore be brave and fear not but advance in the strength of God.

V. Gladly would I now speak a passing word of comfort to another class of workers—THOSE THAT ARE NOT APPRECIATED. I am not going to say much because I have not much sympathy with them. Yet I know that the smallest slight chafes those who are overly sensitive. They murmur, "I do my best and nobody thanks me." You think yourself a martyr and complain that you are misrepresented. Be it so, dear Friend! That was your Master's lot and it is the lot of *all* His servants. This is a cross we must all carry, or we shall never wear the crown! Do you fancy that this is a new experience? Look at Joseph. His brothers could not stand him and yet it was he that saved the family and fed them in time of famine!

Look at David. His brothers asked why he had left the charge of the sheep to come down to the battle, suspecting that the pride of his heart had brought him among the soldiers and the flags. Yet nobody could bring back Goliath's head but that young David! Take a lesson from the ruddy hero. Take no notice of what people say about you. Go and bring back the giant's head! A good adventure is the best answer to evil accusations. If you are serving the Master, let their slander stir you up to more self-consecration. If they cry out against you as too forward, serve the Lord with more vigor and you will antidote the venom of their tongues! Did you enter into Christ's work in order to be honored among men? Then retire from it, for you came with a wrong motive.

But if you enlisted purely to bring honor to Him and to win His smile, what more do you need? What more do you need? Be not, therefore, disheartened because you are not applauded. Be certain of this, that to be kept in the rear rank is often necessary to future eminence. If you take a

man and put him in front and pat him on the back and say, "What a great man he is," he will make a false step before long and that will be the end of your hero! But when a man is brought forward by God, he is often one whom everybody criticizes, finds fault with and declaims as an impostor—and the banter he is exposed to serves as ballast for his mind! When he comes off with success he will not be spoiled with conceit, for the Grace of God will make him bow with gratitude.

The sword that is meant for a princely hand to split through skull and backbone in the day of battle must be annealed in the furnace again and again—it cannot be fit for such desperate work until it has passed through the fire many times. Do not ask to be appreciated! Never be so mean as that. Appreciate yourself in the serenity of conscience and leave your honor with your God!

VI. I must speak now, in the last place, a little more at length to **THOSE WHO ARE DISCOURAGED BECAUSE THEY HAVE HAD SO LITTLE SUCCESS.** It was my great delight, a few evenings ago, to meet a splendid band of men and women who are the Sunday school teachers of this Church. You will think it strange that I did not, till then, thoroughly estimate the extent of their work as I had never added up the total of the various schools. But when I did so and found that they served up to 6,000 children, I felt full of joy! I shall run over with delight if they increase to 12,000 in another 12 months! For so large a district, this would not be too many, but still, our present number is most encouraging.

Now, I know that some of our teachers are working away in back streets, in rooms not connected with any place but this and we hardly knew of them because they were pursuing their simple, unobtrusive labors so quietly. Are there any of you who fear that you have toiled in vain and spent your strength for nothing? I would entreat you, dear Friends, not to be satisfied with casting in the Seed unless you reap some good results, yet do not be so faint-hearted as to give up because of a little disappointment. Though you cannot be satisfied without fruit, yet do not cease to sow because one season proves a failure. I would not have our friends, the farmers, abandon agriculture because this year they have a bad crop! If they were to measure their future prospects by the present failure, it would be a great pity.

If you have preached or taught, or done work for Christ with little success until now, do not infer that you will always be unsuccessful! Regret the lack of prosperity but do not relinquish the labor of seeking it. You may reasonably be sorrowful, but you have no right to despair. Non-success is a trial of faith which has been endured by many a trusty servant who has been triumphant in the issue. Did not the disciples toil all night and catch nothing? Did we not read, just now, of some who cast the net and yet took no fish? Did not our Lord say that some seed would fall on stony ground and some among the thorns and that from these there would be no harvest?

What good did Jeremiah do? I have no doubt he labored and God blessed him, but the result of his preaching was that he said, "The bellows are burned in the fire." He had blown up the fire till he had burnt the bellows, but no man's heart was melted! "Woe is me," said he, "Oh that my

head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears"! I do not know what was the result of Noah's ministry, but I do know that he was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years and yet he never brought a soul into the ark except his own family. Poor preaching we may count it judging by the influence it exerted—and yet we know that it was *grand* preaching such as God commended! Do not, then, grudge the time, or the strength you lay out in the service of our great Lord because you do not see your efforts thrive, for better men than you have wept over failure!

Remember, too, that if you really do serve the Lord thoroughly and heartily, He will accept you and acknowledge your service, even though no good should come of it. It is *your* business to cast the bread on the waters—if you do not find it after many days, that is not your business! It is *your* business to scatter the Seed. No farmer says to his servant, "John, you have not served me well, for there is no harvest." The man would say, "Could I make a harvest, Sir? I have plowed and I have sowed. What more could I do"? Even so our good Lord is not austere, nor does He demand of us more than we can do. If you have plowed and if you have sowed, although there should be no harvest, you are clear and accepted.

Did it never strike you that you may be now employed in breaking up ground and preparing the soil from which other laborers who come after you will reap very plentifully? Perhaps your Master knows what a capital plowman you are. He has a large farm and He never means to let you become a reaper because you do the plowing so well. Your Master does not intend you to take part in the harvest because you are such a good hand at sowing and as He has crops that need sowing all the year round, He keeps you at that work. He knows you better than you know yourself! Perhaps if He were once to let you get on the top of a loaded wagon of your own sheaves, you would turn dizzy and make a fall of it—so He says, "You keep to your plowing and your sowing and somebody else shall do the reaping."

Perhaps when your course is run you will see from Heaven, where it will be safe for you to see, that you did not labor in vain nor spend your strength for nothing. "One sows and another reaps." This is the Divine economy. I think that every man that loves his Master will say, "So long as there does but come a harvest, I will not stipulate about who reaps it. Give me faith enough to be assured that the reaping will come and I will be content." Look at William Carey going to India—his prayer being, "India for Christ." What did Carey live to see? Well, he saw good-speed enough to rejoice his heart—but he certainly did not see the fulfillment of all his prayer.

Successive missionaries have since gone and spent their life on that vast field of enterprise. With what result? A result amply sufficient to justify all their toil, but, as compared with the millions that sit in heathendom, utterly inadequate to the craving of the Church, much less to the crown of Christ! It does not much matter how any one man fares. The mighty empire will revert to the world's Redeemer and I can almost trace, in the records of the future, the writing of, "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had," as the valiant deeds of His heroes are chronicled by our Lord.

When old St. Paul's cathedral had to be taken down in order to make room for the present noble edifice, some of the walls were immensely strong and stood like rocks. Sir Christopher Wren determined to throw them down by the old Roman battering ram. The battering ram began to work and the men worked at it for hours and hours, day after day, without apparent effect. Blow after blow came on the wall! Tremendous thuds made bystanders tremble! The wall continued to stand till they thought it was a useless operation. But the architect knew. He continued working his battering ram till every particle of the wall felt the motion and, at last, over it went in one tremendous crash! Did anybody commend those workmen who caused the final crash, or ascribe all the success to them? Not a bit! It was the whole of them together! Those who had gone away to their meals, those who had begun days before had as much honor in the matter as those who struck the last blow.

And it is so in the work of Christ. We must keep on battering, battering, battering and at last—though it may not be for another thousand years—the Lord will triumph! Though Christ comes quickly, He may not come for another 10,000 years, but in any case idolatry must die and the Truth of God must reign. The accumulated prayers and energies of ages shall do the deed and God shall be glorified! Only let us persevere in holy effort and the end is sure. When a certain American general was fighting, they said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am not doing much, but I keep pegging away." That is what we must do! We cannot do much at any one time, but we must keep on. We must keep on pegging away at the enemy and something will come of it, by-and-by.

Possibly, dear Friends, some of you who think you have had slender success may have had a great deal more than you know. Others there may be whose lack of success should suggest to them to try somewhere else, or else try some other method. If we cannot do good in one way, we must do it in another. Bring the matter before God in prayer. Cry mightily to Him, for He will help you to do it and His shall be the glory! When He has laid you low. When He has taught you how inefficient you are. When He has driven you in despair to rely implicitly upon Him—then it may be that He will give you more trophies and triumphs than you ever dreamed of!

Anyhow, whether I prosper in life or not is not my question. To bring souls to Christ is my main endeavor, but it is not the ultimate proof of my ministry. My business is to live for God, to lay aside self and give myself up wholly to Him and if I do that I shall be accepted whatever else may happen. I wish we had the spirit of that brave old man who was condemned to the stake. They were going to burn him. He knew that the sentence was to be carried out the next morning, but with a soul full of courage and with a merry heart, he sat the last thing at night talking with his friends—firewood and fire to face in the morning, remember—and he said to one of them, "I am an old tree in my Master's orchard. When I was young I bore a little fruit, by His Grace. It was unripe and sour, but He bore with it and I have grown mellow in my older days and brought forth some fruit for Him, by His Grace.

“Now the tree has grown so old that my Master is going to cut it down and burn the old log. Well, it will warm the hearts of some of His family while I am burning.” And he even smiled for joy to think that he might be put to so good a use! I want you to have that spirit and to say, “I will live for Christ while I am young—I will die for Him and warm the hearts of my Brothers and Sisters.” You know that the persecutions of those martyr days begat such heroism and gallantry among disciples as prudent people in peaceful times can scarcely credit. It is said of the old Baptist Church over in the City that the members went to Smithfield early one morning to see their pastor burn. And when someone asked the young people what they went there for, they said that they went to learn the way.

That is splendid! They went to learn the way! Oh, go to the Master’s Cross to learn the way to live and die! See how He spent Himself for you and then sally forth and spend yourselves for Him! “Though Israel is not gathered, yet shall you be glorious in the sight of the Lord.” Though you may think that you do not succeed, your whole-hearted consecration shall be your honor in the day of the Lord! By your hallowed life and your humble service, you shall bring Glory to His name! O Lord, set us in our charges and encourage us in the service of Your house! “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; establish the work of our hands: yes, the work of our hands establish it.” May the blessing of our covenant God rest upon you, my Brothers and Sisters, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 21.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—245, 674, 694.**

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

BELOVED FRIENDS—On this first day of the New Year I salute you with hearty good wishes and pray that every blessing may attend your future steps. I beg, also, on my own behalf, your prayers that through another year my ministry may be more edifying to the saints, more persuasive with sinners and more acceptable to the Lord. I thank the Great Healer that this day smiles upon me and sees me free from pain, reviving in strength and restored in spirit. I shall hope soon to be at work again. Oh for an anointing with fresh oil!

Yours to serve in hearty earnest,

C. H. SPURGEON

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