

IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

NO. 1620

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**On a night when the Tabernacle was thrown open to all comers,
the ordinary hearers vacating their seats for the occasion.**

*“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, with which the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.”
Lamentations 1:12.*

SYMPATHY with suffering ones is never content to act her part alone. The man who is sorrowful for another is sure to invite others to join him in his sympathy. It seems to him so sad a thing that he would have all men weep over it with himself. It is so great a grief that he would hang the heavens with blackness and drape the world in sackcloth. Hence Jeremiah, when he saw the sorrows of Jerusalem, complained of all who dared to pass her by without a lamentation. He beheld that ancient and glorious city besieged by her adversaries, invaded by their fierce armies and given over to plunder, to murder, to fire and desolation. He beheld the streets running with the blood of her sons and daughters, her houses broken down and her glorious Temple defiled and laid in ashes.

Do you wonder that he wept and called upon others to weep with him? He pictured Jerusalem as sitting by the wayside, like a maiden who has been sorely wounded and is in bitter grief, crying out in her loveliness and anguish, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” In all the annals of history there never was sorrow equal to the fate of Jerusalem! Many cities have been destroyed, but none have fallen amid such a tempest of terrors. Some have been devoured with famine, wasted with pestilence, or broken down by war—but as for you, O Jerusalem—all these evils met upon you as when the vultures hasten from afar and meet upon the slain. Beautiful for situation, yet terrible for desolation! Joy of the whole earth and yet the queen of sorrow! How utterly were you spoiled! Had grape-gatherers gathered the grapes, they would have left, here and there, a cluster, but, O Jerusalem, you are thoroughly stripped—no fruit remains in you—your desolation is complete! How terrible was your lot and how grievous was your fault! Well did the Prophet, in the foresight of your tremendous doom, cry to all the nations, “Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?”

But, Friends, the fact of sympathy's eager love of companionship is true in other instances. I, too, share the sympathetic avarice of Jeremiah's pity. Do you ask what grief I have and for whose woes I am a mourner? I point you to the Cross and to the Man of Sorrows there. All faithful servants of Christ who love their Master would have their hearers mourn for

Him, even as the Prophet foretold—"They shall look on Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for Him." When they think of Calvary and of their wounded, bleeding Lord, they cannot help imitating Jeremiah and picturing their Lord as crying from the Cross, "Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow." Therefore in all ages of the Church this has been a favorite text—not as directly meaning what we shall say upon it, but as suggesting an adaptation and asking to be used in our case as Jeremiah used it in his own.

We apply to Jesus and His sufferings, tonight, the words which the Prophet wrote in reference to Judea and her national sorrow. We hear the Son of God saying in His death pangs to all this vast assembly, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow." And this is my first head tonight—the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are unparalleled. When we have dwelt enough upon this, we will proceed to note, secondly, that they have a deep interest to many. And we will conclude, thirdly, by enquiring whether they have not some interest for you?

O that God the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, would now bear His testimony in all your hearts for His mercy's sake.

I. First, then, THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD UPON THE CROSS WERE ALTOGETHER UNPARALLELED. I tell no idle tale tonight! I draw no picture of romance, but the sorrows which we now relate are matters of fact! Out of the excellent Glory let the Lord confirm it tonight, if it is His truth, by the witness of His Spirit. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came down in boundless pity among the sons of men and took upon Himself our human nature! Quitting the infinite honors of the skies, He came to the lowliness of the manger and the labor of the carpenter's shop—and here He lived, suffering as a real man, all the sorrows and infirmities of our mortality.

In our nature He lived some 30 years or more, enduring much of poverty and labor. And at the end, thereof, He died, not amid the applause of all mankind, as He deserved, but nailed to the Cross—like a felon or a slave, a spectacle of scorn and infamy—the despised and rejected of men! The sufferings of this Divine One were unparalleled, first, because of the dignity of His Person which gave such point to the insult which He endured. Kings have died. Philosophers have died. Philanthropists have died, but never such a One as this, for He that bled on Calvary was King, Priest and Prophet—a right royal Man, and more—the Son of the Highest! God that made the heavens and earth was in personal union with that Man who died upon the Cross of Calvary.

What a stoop it must have been for Him—from the brightness of the Father's Glory to be made the image of shame! A dethroned monarch is always the object of compassion and a once famous general, sitting at the city gate and begging for a penny from every traveler that passes by has been, in all ages, spoken of as a person to be deeply pitied. But what shall I say of Him who stood as the center of angelic hosts, the prince of the kings of the earth? Aside He flung His most Divine array! He girded Himself with garments of this flesh and blood and then became a Man among

men and for men—only to be despised of men. Being here among His own, His own received Him not! Instead of *receiving* Him, they dragged Him to the judgment hall.

They scourged Him. They took Him into the common hall of the soldiers and they spat in His face! They blindfolded Him, they buffeted Him. They mocked at all His holy offices. They put an old soldier's cloak about Him and then brought Him out and cried, "Behold the Man!" They nailed Him to the Cross and then stood there and said, "If He is the Christ, let Him come down." They made fun of His prayers and when He said, "Eloi, Eloi," they said, "He calls for Elijah." They spared Him nothing that shame could invent—and all this was poured on One whose feet honored the ground they trod upon, the glances of whose eyes were angels' Law, the words of whose mouth were the music of God's ears. "He was despised and rejected of men," even He who was and is the King of kings, the Lord of lords! Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow which was done unto Him!

There was also this strange point about our Redeemer's suffering, namely, the perfect innocence of His Character. Many a man has died innocent of that which was laid to his charge, but no man has been *perfectly* innocent of every kind of fault. In this Man there was never taint of evil. He was born without tendency to sin, for the natural corruption of our nature was not in Him. And He lived never doing wrong to man, or woman, or child and never, by omission or by commission, violating the Divine will of the Most High. He was absolutely perfect, so that He could say when Satan came to assail Him, "The Prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me."

Now, herein is a sorrow never to be forgotten—that He must bleed and die and, moreover—that He must so suffer as to be connected with sin. It is anguish and agony for even the *breath* of evil to blow upon innocence. He was never guilty and never could have been so in any sense—and yet sin was laid to His charge for *our* sakes—and He died accused of treason and of blasphemy! In Him was no sin and yet the sins of men were laid upon Him! Here, bring them here, the sins of ages! Heap them on His back—the sins of men that lived *before* He was on earth, the crimes of multitudes who transgressed in His own day and the sins of all the ages *since*—your sins and mine! They are all brought together and massed together—the total sum—how dreadful!

Hear the Word of God, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The Innocent, therefore, not only suffers, but suffers in strange connection with sin—and this must have caused an awful shrinking to our Lord's most holy soul. You and I are comparatively hardened to sin and, therefore, it does not so alarm us as it did the perfect soul of Christ who had no spot or trace of evil upon Him. There was one tried for murder years ago and some thought it an argument for his innocence that he stood in the dock calm and composed. But others said, "Not so! Innocent men are the very persons who shudder most at having such a crime laid to their charge and he who could bear the charge without emotion is most probably the man who has committed the crime."

Truth lies in that observation. For the innocent Christ to be made sin for us—for the wrath of God to roll over Him instead of us—must have caused within His spirit a depth of anguish which the most tender heart cannot fathom! Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow! Was there ever dignity that suffered such indignity, or innocence that came into contact with such a mass of sin and suffered for it all? But this is not all, nor half of it! There was another wonder about the sufferings of Christ, namely, that in His case there was such a conjunction of griefs. Have you ever noticed that when you have one trouble, as a rule some other one is absent? Of course, if the north wind blows, the south does not, also, blow and if we have the troubles of summer, we do not also endure the evils of winter at the same time. One grief often strangles another in its arms.

We read in Acts of a place where two seas met. Rough navigation there, my Brethren, where two seas meet, for *one* sea is often more than enough for a sailor! Sometimes you and I have grief on grief and sorrow upon sorrow—and things go hard, then. As to the Savior, it seemed as if every form of grief was let loose against Him on that dark, that dreadful night! All the winds of woe escaped from their cave at that dread hour! He was heavy within Himself, deserted by His friends who ought to have defended Him, betrayed by His bosom companion, slandered by false witnesses, hunted down by false-hearted men! He had no one to speak for Him and He was unable, for a certain reason, to speak for Himself. Griefs of body were added to His sadness of soul. Was there a part of His blessed form that escaped from suffering? I know of none. His whole corporeal frame was the center and seat of pain—a furnace of fever, the melting crucible of death. From the thorn-crowned head to the bleeding feet, all, all were wounds and bruises for our sake!

But the bodily sufferings were only the body of His sufferings—there was an agony of heart, mind and soul. O Brothers and Sisters, if, when you have sickness, you can keep your spirits up, it does not matter! And, perhaps, when the spirits sink, you are happy if you have no pain at the same time. But to have *body* and *soul* at once in the fire, this is, indeed, torture! This is to do business in great waters where all the waves and billows go over the mariner. Hell from beneath was stirred against our Lord—Satan bade his legions aim all their arrows against His heart! Heaven veiled its sun and left the Sufferer in a chill darkness. God hid His face which made Jesus cry, “Why have You forsaken Me?” Earth’s inhabitants seemed leagued to cast Him out.

There is not, to my knowledge, a mitigating circumstance in the woes of Christ. It is bitter, bitter, bitter! And if there is a mixture, it is wormwood mingled with gall. It was all bitter, all tempestuous, all terrible! No drop of water, for in His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink. No ray of light—the sun is set. No stable ground of comfort—the very rocks rend. Heaven and earth stand arrayed against Him! Well does He cry, “Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me.” Oh that these lips had language and could speak aright upon such a theme as this!

But I ask you to notice, next, that there is in our Savior's sorrow this singular point which is not found anywhere else, namely, that all His sorrow was voluntarily undertaken and voluntarily continued in. When a man feels that it must be, he girds himself to bear the will of destiny. But concerning Christ, He was under no compulsion from any force which He could not, Himself, control. He dies but He says, "No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." He is betrayed into the hands of wicked men, but He says that He could presently pray to His Father and He would send Him 12 legions of angels! He has not a word to say to Pilate, but He had ten thousand words which He might have spoken if He would, only that He could not, then, have effected the Divine purpose or worked out our salvation. This perfect freedom involved Him in a double labor—He not only had to suffer, but to *will* to suffer even to the end!

He had, therefore, to put a Divine restraint upon Himself and to bear on when His human nature might have suggested that He should bear no more. It did suggest it, so far as it could do so, without a faulty shrinking. "If it is possible," He said, "let this cup pass from Me." But His holy soul came to the rescue of His resolution, for He added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." It is not in our power to thus yield ourselves to sorrow. If we gave up ourselves once to the hands of pain or death it would be but one act and we should then be out of our own power. But our Lord always had Himself in His own hands and, therefore, He made a continuous offering of Himself by a distinct act of His will until He expired.

Brothers and Sisters, remember that if you were to die for your country, you would only, then, pay the debt of nature a little sooner than it would otherwise be due—the debt would, in any case, have had to be paid in due time. If tonight I died for you, I should but anticipate that hour which may be near enough, now, when I must surely die. Jesus needed not to die. There was no necessity, as far as His Nature was concerned, that He should ever slumber in a grave! Oh, but this is a death altogether unexampled—voluntarily undertaken and voluntarily borne for the good of others! Love led His perfect will in sweet captivity so that He could not do otherwise but die and, with the exception of His own unrivalled love, not another cord held Him, or could have held Him for a moment! Let us give Him our deepest love in return for so special a sacrifice!

And this makes it more singular, still—that those for whom He died thus voluntarily were His enemies! Oh, tell it, tell it all the world over, that Jesus laid down His life for those who hated Him, for those who loved the wages of unrighteousness! Tell it in Hell, tell it on earth, tell it in Heaven! And let the three worlds overflow with wonder at this miracle of love! Let the whole universe hear it—Jesus died for His enemies! His last breath said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He died for those who did not love Him, but thirsted for His blood! He died for those who could not see His beauties—who never *will* see His beauties unless He work a miracle upon them. He died for you and for me! But oh, how shamefully have the best rewarded Him with chill barren love! How shamefully are some here present rewarding Him at this very moment by living in entire neglect of Him—living as if they had nothing to do with the death of Christ at all!

Scarcely for a righteous man will one die—perhaps for a benevolent man one would even *dare* to die. But “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Hear that, O you deaf ears, hear that! O you blind eyes, behold the splendor of this love! O you hard hearts, feel the magic of this deed! Christ died for the ungodly, for the guilty, for the profane, for the drunk, for the unchaste, for the worst of men—He died that He might purify them, lift them out of their degradation, make new men of them—and prove what heavenly love can do! Men were utterly depraved and wedded to their sin—as mad about sin as the lunatic is mad in his delirium, as eaten up with it as a leper with leprosy—and yet for such Christ died! He gave Himself, not for our virtues, but for our sins! He came to seek and save, not the good, but those that were lost. For such did He die and, therefore, His death is altogether unparalleled.

Once more, to crown this edifice of wonder—there was this about Christ’s sorrow which was never in any other sorrow under Heaven, namely, that it was expiatory. Christ was dying and suffering in the place of others—and by that dying and suffering He was putting away the sin of others! This is the substance of the Revelation of God, that Jesus Christ has appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself and there is virtue in His blood to cleanse from all sin. I hear certain philosophical divines denying this Atonement, but I beseech you give no heed to them—they would rob you of your only hope of Heaven! Mark this—there is nothing left of Christianity when Atonement is gone. “The blood is the life thereof,” and if you remove its life, the Gospel will die.

What do you see where this atoning Sacrifice is left out of the preaching? Why, very soon, empty places of worship, for the people soon find that there is nothing there for them and they will not go where they are mocked with husks! To deny the great Doctrine of Atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ is to hamstring the Gospel and to cut the throat of Christianity! Look at this house tonight, this spectacle, this gathered throng! Into what corner could another hearer be thrust? One would think, from the vehement eagerness to enter, that we gave some gorgeous entertainment! Come here any night in all the year, or any morning, if you like, and it is still the same.

Well, why do the people come? To see a man in fine raiment? We wear no millinery! To listen to sweet strains of music and the swell of organs? We have none of it! What do they come for? To hear an orator? Far from it! I have never aimed at oratory, or desired to exhibit it! I have preached Christ out of my very soul and lifted Him up as the Savior of men and, therefore, the people throng the house and they always will while Christ is fully preached in language which they can understand! Men need a Savior as hungry men need bread and as thirsty souls need drink! And they know where that is preached which they require!

Go, tell the men that preach their new doctrine that they cannot stir a tiny village with their fine theories after they have preached them once or twice! And yet for 27 years together we can hold a multitude with no magic but the name of Christ—with no mystery but the Cross, the blood, and the one word—“Believe in Christ and live.” Therefore I preach the old,

old Gospel yet again, harping forever on that one Divine string which has yet more music in it than all the flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries and dulcimers of modern thought! If you would have sin forgiven, forgiveness is to be found in Jesus, and only there! "Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow," for no other sorrow can wipe away sin—not even the pangs of Hell can effect expiation—but the sorrow of Christ can put your sins away! Oh, seek a share in the boundless merit of the Crucified! Turn not away, but seek your Savior's face at once!

II. Thus have I spoken upon the first head and pretty well exhausted my time—therefore only a minute or two upon the second—**THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS HAVE HAD A DEEP INTEREST IN THEM FOR MANY.** Oh that I could set Him forth before you! There He is! Look upon Him! He is before my eyes. I see those languid eyes closing in death, I see that glorious head bowing upon His bosom. I see and I adore! I note with grief the gashes made by the nails in His dear hands and feet from which flows the ruddy stream which scatters roses among the lilies of His pure and spotless flesh! I look into His heart and see it breaking—the soldier has opened a door through which your soul may gaze! My Savior's death is to me all things—I could live and die contemplating it.

It stirs my blood, it opens the fountains of my eyes and makes my inmost heart dissolve. Is it not a thing of power to others, also? Did I hear one ask, "What good has this sorrow ever brought to anyone? Has anybody derived benefit from it?" Let me tell you! Multitudes have found, in the sufferings of Christ, the cure for their despair. Read the biographies of converted men and you shall find cases upon cases where they had been ready to commit suicide—but the sight of a crucified Savior encouraged them to hope and gave them rest. No, you need not read books—speak to any godly man of your acquaintance and he will tell you that the wounds of Jesus were and are the fountains of his hope! Many of you could speak for yourselves and say that nothing could have brought you back from despair on account of sin but a sight of Christ.

I cannot speak without remembering my own case and how bitter were my griefs, how dark my days, how hideous my nights till I saw One hanging on a tree and my state was changed from continual sorrow into perpetual joy! Can I hear Him dishonored and not be moved? Do you think that those of us who owe all the light we have to Jesus crucified can ever think lightly of Him? I pray we never may become so mean, so base! We have a deep and abiding interest in Jesus, for He turned our darkness into day! In others, the sorrows of the Cross have worked a complete transformation of their lives. The Apostle Paul, on the way to Damascus, was going to hunt Christians to death—but the voice of One who said, "I am Jesus whom you persecute" changed his mind so completely that he became the greatest of all preachers of Christ!

You have, most of you, I dare say, heard of the life of Colonel Gardiner, a dissipated officer who indulged, as too many soldiers do, in wantonness. One night he had made an appointment of the most vicious kind and reached the place an hour too soon. Waiting there, alone, he thought that he saw upon the wall, the Savior on the Cross and he thought that he heard Him say to him, "I did all this for you. What have you ever done for

Me?” He fled the house and you know what an earnest soldier of Christ, from that moment, he became! Such miracles have been worked in every age and will be worked to the end of time! Nor are they so rare that you need search far for them. One and another will tell you, if you will listen—some here can tell you for themselves—that the sight of Christ has changed them altogether in a manner as astounding as a miracle!

It has been with them as marvelous a change as if Niagara, leaping down her profound abyss, were suddenly spoken to by the voice which made that mighty flood and her waters began to leap *upward*, ascending the steep fall which they have rushed for ages! The transformation of the lives of men by the sight of the Cross of Christ is as great a marvel as though rivers should seek their source, or midnight brighten into day! It is matchless, superb—there is nothing like it—and they that have once felt its transforming power laugh at infidelity. “What?” they say, “no truth in the Cross? Let the man that has been a leper, the man that has been lame or blind suddenly receive a cure and then tell *him* that there is nothing in it. ‘Pshaw!’ he would say, ‘there is nothing in you, or you would not make the remark!’” And he goes his way and that is all the answer that he deigns. Matters of actual experience may be contradicted, but they cannot be disproved! Men may say what they will, but we are still of the same opinion when once the Cross has worked its marvels upon our souls.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, think what power the Cross has had on other men’s minds to gird them to heroic deeds. I shall never forget when I shook the hand of Livingstone. I count it one of the great honors of my life to have known him and even men of the world will join in doing homage to his name. It was the love of Christ that made him tread pathless Africa and die among the heathen! He was not the first by many a thousand who counted it all joy to succumb to climate and to perish among strangers for the Cross of Christ! Moffat still lives and what a life! There was a John Williams, of whom you older men can remember, who laid down his life at Erromanga for Christ’s sake. These are but the later ranks of a mighty host that counted life not dear to them for Jesus’ sake!

Look at the first centuries—how men marched to the rack to be tortured, to the stake to be burned, to the amphitheatre to be devoured of beasts for Christ’s sake! The lifting up of the little finger of Christ was enough to move hosts of men and women to court death and defy the flames! The Roman empire, with all its legions and cruelties, could not stand against the insignificant, unlettered, humble, but earnest and intense followers of Jesus! The sufferings of Christ made them strong to suffer! Later ages tell the same story. Our own land has seen the heroes of the Cross enduring unto the end. Over there at yon Smithfield, why, there were men and women there who early in the morning, while yet the sun was scarcely up, were summoned forth to stand at fiery stakes and burn—and they were seen to clap their hands, when every finger was a candle—and cry, “None but Christ! None but Christ!”

And the crowd that stood around them, who were they? There were cruel men and brutal priests, but there were also men, women and children, of whom it is written, in the humble Church records of the day, that they went there to see their pastor burn to learn the way! Oh, that is

grand to learn the way to die when their turn came—for the idea of ever yielding up to the papacy, or of giving up Christ because they must die for Him or else deny Him never entered into their heads! Even boys and girls learned at their mother's knee so much of Jesus' sufferings that they became invincible! Yes, and we should be so, again, if it ever came to the same pass, for the old name and the old love still linger in the hearts of Christians today with all their faults and infirmities! And, if it came to battle and to push of pike again, we are as ready, by the good hand and Grace of God, as were our Puritan forefathers—our Protestant ancestors—ready to seal the faith with our blood! This is what the Cross of Christ can do! It can make men suffer for His name sake.

Ah, but you may not be called to that, you say, "What is the use of the Cross of Christ to us in everyday life?" Why, it is of this use—that men who love the suffering Savior become patient in their everyday sufferings! They say to themselves—

***"His way was much rougher
And darker than mine.
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer,
And shall I repine?"***

They learn to hate sin by seeing the agonies by which Redemption was obtained. They learn to be upright by seeing with what a price they are bought. They learn to be self-denying at the feet of the Crucified. This is the good of the Cross to them and this is the way they learn both to live and to die!

This black cloth which casts its somber hue around my platform is the memorial of one dear soul, my Sister, who learned to love the Savior while she was yet young and, in her early days, joined with this Church. And in her death, when it was a pang to draw each breath, she found her joy, her victory, in resting in the Divine Savior! She was a soldier's daughter and was not ashamed to join with the despised people of God! And in her long pains and agonizing death she found sustaining power in the doctrine of the Cross and found victory in death.

Hold, then, Your Cross before my failing eyes, O Jesus! Let me see You when I can see nothing else! At the sight of You I will leap the stream of death! I will defy death, as Samson defied the lion. I will find honey in the vanquished monster if You are there. It is not death to die if the death of Christ is but the life of the soul! This is what multitudes of men and women have had to do with Christ. They have not passed Him by, but bowed at His feet and found life, light, joy, perfection, Heaven!

III. And I close with this last appeal—what, dear Hearers—WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH HIM? "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Now, I do not suppose that Jesus Christ means much to some that are here present, I mean people that are getting on in the world. Everything is going very easily with you. You are rising like a balloon! You are filled and inflated with prosperity! You are getting as much money as you can count. You are going on very well without a Savior. You have your portion in this life. I should not wonder if you turn on your heel and despise Him and say that you do not need a Savior. "We will meet another day, young Sir, when all that wine is sour and that gold is corroded and those pleasures, like the

dew of the morning, shall have disappeared beneath the burning sun of care."

But for a while, I doubt not, Jesus Christ will be nothing to you. It is dreary talk and a weariness to hear about Him. But is there one here heavy of heart? Are there not many here conscious of fault? Are you wrong? Would you be right? Are you guilty? Would you be forgiven? Ah, then, the Cross for you! Jesus is for you! Turn aside and look at Him! Look till your eyes are full of tears. Look till you brush those tears away and say, "I see it all. Jesus has suffered in *my* place. I am forgiven! My Father has adopted me. I am His child. I am glad." Oh, guilty ones, there is something in Christ for you, for He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God!

Perhaps there is another here who is not so much laboring under a sense of fault as under a sense of aimlessness in life. Do you feel, "Well, somehow, I have no purpose in life. I keep on like a blind horse round a mill, but I do not go anywhere and, what is more, I do not know what I am toiling for." To bring up my children? Well, perhaps that is done. They are all settled in life and, you say, "I do not know what more is to be done. I do not seem to have any objective worth striving after." My Master's sorrows may enlist you. The Red-Cross Knight, when he bore the cross upon his arm as he fought with the Saracen, (though he was under a grave delusion, for Christ would not have us fight with deadly weapons), yet felt strong because he thought that the name of Christ was named upon him.

But if you become a true knight of the red Cross by living for the glory of Christ, you will rise to a noble enthusiasm and find an aim in life of which you will never tire! The love of the Crucified shall be a wellspring of vigor to your own heart. It shall make you brave against all odds and shall bring you great reward and sure victory. Oh, if I had not an objective in life, today, I would wish to give myself to Christ and then begin to tell to others His dear name that I might win their hearts to the love of my sweet Lord! For, as it is, I know of no man I would change with, so long as I have but opportunities of spreading abroad the fame and name of Jesus Christ, my suffering Lord and royal Master!

Perhaps you are anxious to benefit others. Oh, if you are, you need to be doing something real and effective. The world is going to the bad. There is a great deal of mischief abroad. You say, "I want to do good." Friend, turn aside, look at Christ's sufferings and see whether you have not, *there*, the fulcrum for your lever! To move rocks and mountains, here, is an unrivalled force—not steam power or dynamite, but something stronger—but an ounce of the Doctrine of the Cross would blast all the walls of error and burst the dungeons of misery, if rightly applied! Come to Christ and see if you have not there, by the power of the Holy Spirit, an irresistible agent of good to all mankind.

"Oh," says one, "I do not believe in Him." What do you believe in? For whatever you believe in, try to use it for the good of your fellow men. I would like to see you sending city missionaries from street to street to preach what you believe in. Come, be reasonable and do something more than find fault! Some are so fond of pulling down. Would they try a little building up? Come, then! You say that we Christians are doing no good.

Just try your own hand at it! Go to the dying! Go to the sick! Take them bottles of your philosophy and comfort them with the elixir of scientific doubt. Go ahead! If somebody says that the current system of medicine is faulty, we reply—Very well, Sir. Have you found the right medicine? “Yes.” Then distribute it, train physicians and build hospitals! Get to work at it. Why not?

Now, you that do not believe in God or Christ, send your own missionaries abroad. Enlighten the heathen by telling them that there is no God, no sin, no Hell, no Heaven, no soul, no anything! Go into the center of Africa and win them from their bloody superstitions by the doctrines of science. Go ahead! If you have a gospel, do not hide it! What? You have no zeal in that direction. But why not? There is no particular use in it, is there? Not worth spending your money on. Miserable comforters! Wretched physicians that cannot heal!

But now, if you want to know whether there is power in the Cross, ask a city missionary to let you go with him for a day. Pitch on the right man and go and see for yourself. He will show you what the Doctrine of the Cross can do in comforting, in sobering, in cheering, in elevating. “I do not believe it,” says one. No one said you did. I will, however, venture to observe that, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” A good old English proverb, my dear Sir! Here is a ship filling with water and you do not believe in pumps. Very well. I am going on pumping! You are anxious to discuss. Discuss away, but meanwhile I pump! Let every Christian man here make practical use of the Cross of Christ and keep on at it! And if men will not even take the trouble to enquire what are its results—their disbelief is irrational and inexcusable—and they must answer the consequences. Our skirts are clear of their blood.

Dear Friend, what if it should turn out that you have such a connection with the Cross that Christ redeemed you there—that Christ put your sins away there? What if He so bought you there that He means to have you? What if you are so His that He means to save you? What if, when He died there, He bought eternal life for *you* and insured for you a place in Heaven at the right hand of God to reign there with Himself? “Oh, if I thought that,” says one, “I would come to Him.” Come to Him, then, and it is true, for, “whoever believes in Him has everlasting life!” Let me say that word over again. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” If he only believed a minute ago—if he only believed a *second* ago—He has not only life but *everlasting* life! That life, therefore, is a thing that can never die. You have Heaven as well as all the blessings of earth if you believe in Jesus!

But if you say, “I will have nothing to do with Jesus,” I would like you to say so to yourself in a deliberate manner. If Christ is not worth having, say that you will not have Him and say it most distinctly. I feel hopeful when a man will come to a decision one way or the other. The sort of people for whom I tremble are those who say, “I hope it will be all right somehow.” O, Sirs, do not hesitate another hour, but answer me as in God’s name I question you—will you have Christ, tonight, or will you not? Say, “Yes,” or, “No.” I would ask you to write down your decision when you get home. Is Christ’s yours or not? Sit down and say deliberately, “Yes, my

Lord, in the merits of Your death I put my trust.” Or else write it if you mean it—“He is not mine at all.”

We have known some get comfort out of this act of decision. There was a poor girl who had long been a Christian, but she was very sad at heart through sickness. And when her minister came to see her, he said to her, “Well, Susan, how is your hope?” She said, “Sir, I am afraid I am not a Christian. I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ.” He said, “Why, I always thought you did. You acted as if you did.” “No,” she said, “I am afraid I have deceived myself and that I do not love Him.” The minister wisely walked to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, “I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ,” and he said, “Susan, here is a pencil. Just put your name to that.” “No, Sir,” she said, “I could not sign *that*.” “Why not?” “I would be torn to pieces before I would sign it, Sir.” “But why not sign it if it is true?” “Ah, Sir,” she said, “I hope it is not true. I think I *do* love Him.”

Get to know where you are, Friend. If Baal is God, serve him! If God is God, serve Him! If Christ is a Savior, have Him—if He is not a Savior, do not pretend to serve Him! Decide one way or the other. God help you to decide, tonight, as you will decide when the heavens are on fire, when sun and moon have vanished from their spheres, when the solid earth shall rock and reel and over all shall be heard the trumpet note, “Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!” There sits the Judge, the Crucified, whose sorrows surpassed all sorrows, but whose Glory, then, shall surpass all glory as He shall divide the saints on the right from the graceless on the left—and from His mouth shall come the final sentence which shall settle the doom of Believers and unbelievers.

God bless you, dear Friends, every one of you. Henceforth and forever may you be the Lord’s. Amen and amen!

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PLEADING WITH THE INDIFFERENT

NO. 3360

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

***“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger.”
Lamentations 1:12.***

THIS was the lamentation of Jeremiah. As he saw the desolation of the beloved city, as he marked the cruelties inflicted by the invaders upon the Jewish youth, children and maidens, and as he foresaw the long years of bitterness reserved for the captives in Babylon, he felt as if he were a peer in the realm of misery—indeed peerless. He stands foremost, a very emperor of grief, a king of sighs and tears. “Behold, and see,” he said, “if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me.”

But may there not have been griefs as great as those of Jeremiah? Is the language that flows from his lips strictly accurate? Like most of the periods which flow from abundant grief, is there not some exaggeration here? If we take the words out of the mouth of Jeremiah and put them into the mouth of Jesus—if we suppose them to be spoken by Him, as, hanging on the Cross He did bear the wrath of God for us, then there is no hyperbole, no exaggeration! The words may be read as they stand—and stand as we read them—and their fullest weight shall not outweigh the truth!

This evening two things challenge our attention—*an earnest expostulation*—“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?” And *a solemn question*—“Behold, and see, was there ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?” First—

I. AN EARNEST EXPOSTULATION.

The Son of God has become Incarnate. He became Man out of love to men. But men loved Him not and though in Him was every perfection, they hunted and hounded Him to death! The story is told four times over by Inspired authority in this Book, but the mass of mankind feel no concern in it. I come here tonight and I say to many of you—does not the story of Jesus at all interest you? You heard it read just now, did it fall flat and stale upon your ears? Did you say to yourselves, “It is dry work

to listen to that. There is nothing there to strike the attention. If I had taken up a newspaper and had read of some murder, my wits would have been all awakened, but in the hearing of this death of Christ, I feel not at all stirred." Well, then, I ask you—Why is this? Why is it so? If there is anything in all the world that ought to interest a man, it is the death of Christ! Yet I find men, learned men, spending year after year in sorting out butterflies, beetles and gnats, or in making out the various orders of shells, or in digging into the earth and seeking to discover what strange creatures once floundered through the boundless mire, or swam in the vast seas! I find men occupied with things of no sort of practical moment and which, to me, do not seem so wonderfully enchanting. Yet the story of God, Himself, who deigned to become a man and as a Man suffered, and bled, and died, is thought to be too small a trifle for minds to dwell upon it. O reason! Where have you gone? O judgment! Where have you fled? Men spend their strength on trifles, but on God Incarnate they turn their backs!

It is strange that even the *sufferings of Christ* do not attract the attention of men, for generally if we hear any sad story of the misfortunes of our fellow creatures, we are interested. The newspaper is accounted more than usually interesting which contains full particulars of shipwrecks, the blowing down of houses, murders, shootings, killings and I do not know what! Everybody has felt he could read such a paper as that because it concerned his fellow men—what they had lost and what they had suffered. Everyone stops to hear the tale of the ancient mariner! Even the wedding guest is held while he, with the earnest eyes, tells how he suffered on the wide, deep, stagnant sea. And yet this story of a Man who came to our earth with no motive but love, and lived here to do nothing but good, and yet was so despised and rejected as to be nailed to a cross, and there made to die in the midst of jeers, sneers, pains and unknown agonies—this does not interest men! I marvel, and yet I marvel not at the strange indifference of this age to the wonders of Calvary! How is it Earth does not stretch out her hands and say, "Come and tell us of the God that loved us and came down to our low estate—and suffered for us men and for our salvation"? How is it that the crowds of this great city do not come and besiege our houses and say, "Tell us yet again this strange, mysterious story of the sufferings of the perfect Son of God"? It ought to interest us, if nothing more! Is it nothing to you, however? Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?

It ought to be more than interesting—it ought *to excite our admiration*. You cannot read of a man sacrificing himself for the good of his fellow creatures without feeling at once that you wish you had known that fine fellow! And you feel instinctively that you would do anything in the world to serve him if he still lives, or to help relatives left behind if he has died

in a brave attempt. Who does not esteem, though you never knew him, the good man at Bethnal Green who perished but lately in the explosion at the firework factory? He rushes in to seek to rescue others and is found, at last, a handful of ashes bewailed by a weeping wife! One felt at once, "There was a man who had a soul beating beneath his ribs." But is no admiration to be given to the Son of God who left a Throne of Glory without bound and came here below to poverty, to shame, to a life of contempt and toil—and then voluntarily gave Himself up to a death which never could have been inflicted upon Him if He had not given Himself up to die? Jesus Christ had no motive in suffering but the good of men! Nothing selfish ever crossed His soul. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it was pity that ruled His heart—pity, and only pity—and while we set up our statues in reverence of men who have loved their fellow men and speak of such-and-such a man as "a great philanthropist," is it nothing to you that Jesus should die for men and shall this greatest of all philanthropists, this first and chief of lovers of the race of men, be altogether forgotten? I would admire Him even if He had not saved me! If I had no share in His blood, I think I would love Him. The life of Christ enchants me! The death of Christ binds me to His Cross! Even if I were never washed in His blood and were even cast away into Hell, if that were possible, I still feel I must admire Him for His love to others! Yes, and I must adore Him, too, for His godlike Character and His godlike sufferings for the sons of men! But why, why is it that such a Christ, so lovely and so admirable, is forgotten by the most of mankind and is nothing to them?

Now, my dear Hearers, there are some of you to whom I might put this question very closely. You have heard about Jesus very often. This pulpit is always ringing with His name. And you have admired what Jesus did. I know you have and if any spoke ill of Him, you would be very grieved—and you would be among the first to defend His name! And yet—and yet—is that all? Are you always going to be interested and to admire, but are you never going further? Is it, after all, to come to this, that it is nothing to you that Jesus should die? You have no interest in that death, no part, no lot in the salvation which that death brings to the sons of men! I am afraid that with some of you it will be so all your days. Fifteen years have I preached to some of you—15 years! And if those 15 years have not brought you to Christ, is there any reason to believe that 15 more years will do it? No, I fear that with some of you the harvest is past and the summer is ended—and you are not saved. There was a time when this voice did seem to cut into your soul and the Truths of God that were uttered awakened your conscience! But it is all nothing to you now. You could go to sleep under the sound of it and your soul does sleep under the sense of it! What? Will you be lost? Have you resolved to be lost with a Savior lifted up before you? Have you determined that you

will never look to Him who is lifted up to save you from the serpent's bite? Shall Christ, the Water of Life, never be tasted by your lips? Do you elect to perish of thirst? Shall this Bread of Life be never eaten? Do you choose rather to starve than to come to Him? No, you tell me you hope one of these days. Ah, but I have no hope of you for any day but today! And I wish you, too, knew that procrastination is of all things fatal. I would sooner that you resolved to be damned than that you only said, "Tomorrow, tomorrow." For if today you resolved upon your ruin, you might be startled at the resolution—and you might be led to see your folly and awakened to amend your steps! But if you always say, "Tomorrow, tomorrow," it will be the will-o'-the-wisp that will tempt you into the fatal morass where souls have been lost by tens of thousands—as yours will be!

Oh, why should I have to be always coming down these steps and into this pulpit, to say over and over and over again to you that Jesus died—and that if you trust Him you shall live? Why should it need to be repeated over and over? Great God of patience, such a story as this ought to be accepted of the heart at once! If You bear with men who reject it, we may well bear with them, too, but, oh, we pray You let them not go too far with Your long-suffering, nor venture too much upon Your patience, lest You lift Your hand and swear in Your wrath that they shall not enter into Your rest because they had the Gospel, but they counted not themselves to be worthy of it!

One thing I would say to you, to all of you to whom it seems as yet to be nothing that Jesus should die—that personally to me it *is* something that He should die. It is more than something—it is everything—and I will tell you why. It is much to me that Jesus died, for I know I slew Him. I sang those verses just now and I sang them with some bitterness of soul, I was forced to feel—

“Tis I have thus ungrateful been.”

If it were not that I had sinned, as one of the race, there had been no need for Christ to die. But as it was sin that pierced and nailed Him, I had a share in His death. But then I know another thing—that by that death I am delivered from the very guilt that put Him to death! I have looked to Him and I am forgiven. Fleming tells us in a book of his, that a great culprit had been condemned to be hanged at Ayr. He had been a very great offender, but while he lay in prison, God granted him repentance and he was heard to say continually as they took him to the scaffold, "Oh, but He's a great forgiver! Oh, but He's a great forgiver!" And I have often felt as if I could stand and cry, yes, even dance and say it, "Oh, but He's a great forgiver! Oh, but He's a great forgiver!" My innumerable sins confessed to Him were blotted out, each one, and peace and joy bestowed where all before was fear and trembling! Now, there are

hundreds in this house that could say the same. If I were to ask it, and this were the proper time, there are thousands within this dome who could rise and say, "I, too, can say that it is much to me that Jesus died, for though I slew Him, yet by His death I live, and by the blood which I drew from His veins I have been washed and made white." Now, if it is so much to us, we do sincerely wish, oh, unconverted ones, that Christ were as much to you, for we do think He ought to be! We desire that He should be! We pray that He may be and we tremble, even to horror, lest, after all, He should not be, for if Christ is nothing to you, it will be a hard dying for you, a hard dying—the bed shall be of iron and the pillow shall be cold as ice—and it will be hard passing into a disembodied state! It will be hard coming before God. It will be hard for when your body rises in the day of the Resurrection, when the trumpet sounds, and the sepulchers are burst open, and your body, linked to your soul again, shall stand before the flaming Throne of Christ! It will be hard for you—oh, so hard—throughout eternity! An eternity without Christ! An eternity without Christ! "Nothing to you, nothing to you," you say now, but how will it be when conscience shall remind you in eternity, "you heard of Christ, but you said He was nothing to you! You listened to earnest admonitions, but you said they were nothing to you." How will this stir the fire? How will this fan the flame? How will this prick your conscience and vex your spirit, that Jesus died, and inestimable mercies dropped from the Cross—pardons sealed with blood were distributed freely upon Calvary and broken hearts were healed—and sins were forgiven and the dead were raised and the lost were saved? But it was all nothing to you, nothing to you! Oh, before death comes—and he is on his way to some here present—on his way to meet them soon! Before death comes on the pale horse with Hell following at his heels, I beseech you, as you love your souls, look to the Crucified and be not satisfied till you can say, "He is everything to me! I slew Him, but He saved me! I looked to Him and I live!"

May God bless this admonition and my heart shall be glad, indeed, if He will but do it. Oh, how little can I do for you, you unconverted ones, how little can I do for you! When I sometimes get a handshake from some of you, and you say, "Well, I have been hearing you for years, Sir, but I am not converted," I look hopefully upon you, but I cannot help, when I get away, reproaching myself in part and saying, "Have I preached to these people as I ought to?" You make me wake up at night to weep about you and to ask myself again and again, "What more can I say? How shall I put it? With what force and power can I deliver it, if perhaps I may reach their hearts?" Oh, I trust you may yet be brought—and God shall be praised and glorified world without end! Now, let us change to a second point—

II. A SOLEMN QUESTION.

The Lord Jesus Christ may be represented here as bidding men see if there is any sorrow like unto His sorrow which is done to Him. Now, observe, that it may be truthfully said that *the sufferings of Jesus were altogether unique and by themselves*. There were never any sufferings which could match His—and never was there such an illustrious sufferer put to such boundless shame. He was the eye of Heaven, the very sun and star of the bright world! It was the seraph's bliss to do Him homage. King of kings and Lord of lords was He, and the government was upon His shoulders! And His name was called Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace! All the hallelujahs of eternity rolled up at His august feet! But He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief! And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not. They spat into His face. They plucked off His hair. They blindfolded Him. They struck Him with their fists. They scourged Him. The bloody scourges made the sacred drops roll. They gave Him a felon's death and then stood by and mocked His prayers and made jests about His groans and pangs! Never was One so high brought so low. "Behold and see if there were ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me." Never One so innocent, so falsely accused. He had done no evil. He was no rival of Caesar. He said His Kingdom was not of this world. Instead of doing evil, He had done boundless good. His food and His drink were to do God's will. His delight was to help the poor, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick. He was all gentleness, all goodness. From both His hands He scattered His bounties lavishly among the graceless sons of men—and yet they said He was guilty of sedition and of blasphemy! He, seditious? He a blasphemer? Lying could go no farther! Bribed witnesses could not be made to agree! The lie was too massive even for those to compass who were willing to have compassed it! Oh, was ever grief like His—to be treated as a felon and put to death as though guilty—when all the while He did no sin, neither was deceit found on His lips!

Remember, Beloved, that in our Savior's death there were aggravations of an extraordinary kind. Before He actually came to die, that dreadful night in Gethsemane had broken His already emaciated frame. There He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. In two or three cases, other persons have sweat drops of blood, but they have invariably died. Our Savior did this and yet lived. Oh, how was the bitterness of His soul expressed in that awful overflow which fell upon Gethsemane's soil! Then, remember, He was led, deserted by His friends, without any comfort from His God, to be tried by Herod, by Pilate, by Caiaphas—to be scourged, beaten, probably several times with rods and scourges. God forsook Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken

Me?” was the very depth of His agony and without one to pity, one to administer comfort, utterly forsaken, our Savior died with aggravations of agonies that were to be found in no other death!

Still, the singularity of His death lies in another respect. There was never sorrow like the sorrow which was done unto Christ, *because all His sorrow was born for others*. Whatever you and I may suffer, we deserve it and, directly or indirectly, we may trace it to the fact that we are sinners. But He was not a sinner. In Him was no sin and neither suffering nor death could lawfully have been laid upon Him had He not made Himself the Substitute for His people. Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like His sorrow! He bears the sin of many. He is numbered with the transgressors. He stands vicariously to endure what never could have been His if it had not been that He was a Surety and stood in His people’s place.

Now, I want your thoughts just one minute. What was it that Christ, as Substitute, had to endure? Answer—Although it may not have been precisely what we ought to have endured, it must have been something equivalent thereto. Now, what ought one sinner to have suffered? Answer—Eternal misery in Hell! What, then, what then must have been the pangs which in Christ’s case stood as the equivalent for the eternal agonies of *one sinner*? But Christ died not for one sinner, but for tens of thousands, for countless multitudes, whom no one can number! Think, then, my Brothers and Sisters, what must have been the crushing blows which Jehovah laid on Him when those blows were to be an equivalent for the hells of ten thousand times ten thousand of those for whom He suffered! Of course, it were not possible for Him to have endured, even for one, if He had not been God! His Godhead gave Him an infinite capacity for misery and infused a boundless degree of misery into all the pangs He bore. You have no more idea of what Christ suffered in His soul than you have when you take up in a shell, a drop of seawater! What Christ suffered is utterly inconceivable! We are not just to think of Him as dying as another dies. His was a vast soul, so great a soul that it seemed to have all souls within it—and it had the capacity for suffering what all souls might have borne—and the whole of that vast Nature which God had given, that wondrous Nature which He Himself also essentially possessed—was put forth to make an Atonement for human sin. “Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me.”

“Oh, let us now, instead of talking any more, sit down by meditation at the foot of the Cross and look up! ‘Tis the King! ‘Tis the King, but He is crowned with thorns! It is the Prince of Glory, but He is stripped naked to His shame! It is the Ancient of eternal days, but He bows His head to die! He is God, All-Sufficient, yet He cries, “I thirst”! He is the angel’s darling,

but He is despised and rejected of men! Hark, He fills Heaven with honor! His Presence gilds Heaven with light, yet there upon the Cross He is covered with darkness! And the music about Him is that of His own sighs, and cries, and groans. Was ever grief like Yours? Needless question! Needless question! All but shameful question, for were all griefs that ever were condensed into one, they were no more worthy to be compared therewith than the glowworm's tiny lamp with the ever-blazing sun!

What then, Beloved, what then? If Christ is thus alone in suffering, what then? Why, *let Him stand alone in our love*. High, high, high set up Christ in your heart! Now, Brothers and Sisters you have many objects of your affection, but oh, lift up my lord, your soul's Bridegroom, your spirit's Well-Beloved! Come now, if you have thought well of Him, think better of Him! If you have loved Him, oh, love Him more! Now, ask to have your heart inflamed, as with coals of juniper, which have a vehement heat, and let that heart be all His own! Oh, let there be no such love as your love to Christ! Let it pass the love of women! Let it go beyond a mother's love, a brother's affection, a father's tenderness! Love Him—you cannot match His love to you, but at least seek to let your little stream run side by side with the mighty river!

If Christ is thus alone in suffering, Brothers and Sisters, let us seek to make Him, if we can, alone in our service. We do not do much for Christ, compared with what we should. Some have learned to give much, but yet what is our giving for such an one as He is? We only give what we can spare—how few of us ever pinch ourselves for Him? He smarted for us and gave up even His very garments for us, but we do not come to that. In the olden times they did—saints, martyrs and Christian missionaries made sacrifice of all and counted it no sacrifice out of love to Him. I wish we had more Marys who would break the alabaster box of precious ointment upon His dear head. Oh, for a little extravagance of love, a little fanaticism of affection for Him, for He deserves ten thousand times more than the most enthusiastic ever dream of rendering! If He is thus, Brothers and Sisters, so far beyond all others in His sorrow, let Him also be first and foremost tonight *in our praise*. If you have poetic minds, weave no garlands except for His dear brow! If you are men of eloquence, speak no glowing periods except to His honor! If you are men of wit and scholarship, oh, seek to lay your scholarship at the foot of His Cross! Come here with all your talents and yield them to Him who bought them with His blood! Come, here, you with much and yet with little—come with hearts so warm whom He loved so well—

***“Here then your music bring,
Strike aloud each cheerful string!
Mortals join the hosts above,
Come and praise redeeming love.”***

The Lord give us such a frame of mind as that, tonight, when we come to the breaking of bread, and His be the glory. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 69:1-21; MARK 15:15-23; LUKE 23:26-33.**

We shall read together at this time a part of the 69th Psalm and afterwards two passages in the New Testament. Although there is no doubt that this Psalm is intended to describe a very large class of sufferers, we think it never had its full meaning perfectly carried out until our blessed Lord and Master suffered at the hands of men. We shall read the Psalm believing that it is full of Christ. It is absolutely certain that we have references here to His Advent, His passion and His Resurrection.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, a Psalm of David.

Verse 1. *Save me, O God, for the waters are come into My soul.* The waves have not only teased the bank, but they have dashed over the bulwarks and there is a flood within, as well as a flood without.

2. *I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow Me.* We had this text explained to us last Friday night when the traveler told us he saw a man sink in the mud, almost swallowed up by it, till by a very desperate grasp of the boat, he made his escape. Christ was, as it were, sucked in by the great deeps of His afflictions—as if He would quickly be swallowed up.

3. *I am weary of My crying: My throat is dried.* He had been so long in the Garden in that awful agony, with strong crying and tears.

3, 4. *My eyes fail while I wait for My God. They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head.* See Him now in the street being led away to Mount Calvary—a vast multitude has congregated there, all eager to see Him die!

4. *They that would destroy Me, being My enemies wrongfully, are mighty.* They have the Roman soldiers at their backs, while the mob applauds them.

4. *Then I restored that which I took not away.* Christ did not take away our innocence, nor our safety, nor our honor, but He restored them all to us! He has made us clean! He has made us accepted in the Beloved! He has put a crown of pure gold upon our heads and set our feet upon a rock.

5. *O God, You know my foolishness and my sins are not hid from You.* These words are not applicable to our Lord, except so far as they may refer to *our* foolishness and to *our* sin, which we know were all laid on Him. But one commentator says that He is here speaking according to the manner of the people. They called Him foolish. They charged Him with sin, but He appeals to Heaven, “Lord, You know whether I have been foo-

lish, whether I have any sins or not.” In that sense we might apply it literally to the Savior.

6. *Let not them that wait on You, O Lord God of Hosts, be ashamed for My sake: let not those who seek You be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel.* “Let not the shame of My Cross destroy their faith. Grant unto them such confidence in Me that they may take up their cross daily and follow Me, that they may even learn to say with My Apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

7. *Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered My face.* It was for His Father’s sake that He might bring honor to Jehovah, that He thus suffered reproach. “Shame has covered My face”—that face which is brighter than the sun and which angels desire to gaze upon!

8. *I have become a stranger unto My brethren.* “Peter says he knows Me not. All of them have forsaken Me.”

8, 9. *And an alien unto My mother’s children. For the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up and the reproaches of them that reproached You are fallen upon Me.* Every hard word that was spoken of the Father fell upon the Son—the iniquities which were rebellions against Jehovah all fell upon the Man of Nazareth!

10. *When I wept, and chastened My soul with fasting, that was to My reproach.* That was scandal unto them.

11. *I made sack cloth also My garment; and I became a proverb unto them.* Just as Michal said of David, “How glorious did the King of Israel become in the eyes of his handmaidens!” Out of mockery, so did they reproach Christ, “How glorious was the King of Israel, so daintily arrayed in a peasant’s robe, or stripped naked upon His Cross.”

12. *They that sit in the gate speak against Me.* The judges who there dispensed justice. The merchants who there trade their wares. The idlers who were there to loiter, to hear the news—these all speak against Me.

12. *And I became the song of the drunkard.* They made ballads of Him. We may understand that to mean they issued lampoons—every now and then there came out a caricature.

13, 14. *But as for Me, My prayer is unto You, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear Me, in the truth of Your salvation, deliver Me out of the mire, and let Me not sink: let Me be delivered from them that hate Me, and out of the deep waters.* Imagine you hear your Master as He silently prays this prayer in the streets of Jerusalem—the mobs are hooting, but He is praying—women are weeping and He is weeping, too.

15-20. *Let not the flood overflow Me, neither let the deep swallow Me up, and let not the Pit shut her mouth upon Me. Hear Me, O Lord, for Your loving kindness is good: turn unto Me according to the multitude of Your tender mercies. And hide not Your face from Your Servant; for I am in*

trouble: hear Me speedily. Draw near unto My soul, and redeem it: deliver Me because of My enemies. You have known My reproach and My shame, and My dishonor: My adversaries are all before You. Reproach has broken My heart. This is one of the most extraordinary verses in Holy Writ!

20, 21. *And I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.* Now, let us read the incidents in the history of Christ, of which this Psalm is a sort of prophecy and exposition.

MARK 15:15-23.

Verses 15-23. *And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged Him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led Him away into the hall which is called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head. And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews. And they smote Him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross. And they brought Him unto the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.* I shall have to show you that this was given to Him in mercy. The Romans always gave, before crucifixion, a cup of drugged wine, in order to lessen the sensibilities of the victim. In this case there was not only myrrh in the cup, but gall. A second cup of gall Christ did drink, but this cup, being intoxicating, He would not receive—when He had tasted it, He would not drink. He needed the possession of all His faculties—and in their clearest state—in order to do combat with the dreadful powers of darkness.

LUKE 23:26-33.

Luke supplies some particulars which Mark has left out. Turn, therefore, to the 23rd Chapter of Luke and the 26th verse. Luke, also, tells us of Simon.

Verse 26. *And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* Now these are the things which Mark has not put in.

27, 29. *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto*

them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. This was accounted a curse, but their curses would seem blessings to them when compared with the curse of the dreadful slaughter at Jerusalem!

30, 31. *Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry? If they do these things while yet the Jewish State is standing, what will they do when that State is broken up? If they do these things to innocent persons—a green tree—what will they do to the unhallowed person, the ungodly and the rebellious who are like dry, rotten trees? How will the flame lay hold on those branches out of which the sap of virtue has long ago been dried?*

32. *And there were also two other, malefactors. It should be “others”—there should be an “s” there.*

32, 33. *Led with Him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Shall we refuse to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ? I think not. If any ask us whether we will leave Him because of the fears which may be excited by the world’s frowns, this shall be our answer—let us sing it—with regard to the world and all its temptations—*

***“No, facing all its frowns or smiles,
Counting its gain but loss!
Outside the camp we take our place,
With Jesus bear the Cross.”***

—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.**

WATCH-NIGHT SERVICE

NO. 59

**HELD AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
ON TUESDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 31, 1855.**

“Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him for the life of your young children that faint for hunger at the head of every street.”
Lamentations 2:19.

IF it is enquired why I held a Watch-Night, let the answer be because I hoped that the Lord would acknowledge the service and thus souls might be saved. I have preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ at all hours and see no reason why I may not preach at midnight if I can obtain hearers. I have not done it from imitation but for the best of reasons—the hope of doing good—and the wish to be the means of gathering in the outcasts of Israel. God is my witness, I would preach every hour of the day if my body and mind were equal to the task. When I consider how souls are being damned and how few there are who cry and mourn over them, I am compelled to cry with Paul, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” Oh, that the new year may be far better than the last!

I am almost sorry to see this service in print and fear it will rob many of their week’s food from the regular Sermon—but as it is done, I will pray the Lord to acknowledge it for Jesus’ sake.—C. H. S.

The Chapel being densely crowded in every part, the preacher entered the pulpit and, after prayer, solemnly read the verse—which the congregation then sang—

***“You virgin souls, arise!
With all the dead awake
Unto salvation wise,
Oil in your vessels take—
Upstarting at the MIDNIGHT CRY,
Behold your heavenly Bridegroom nigh!”***

Two Brothers then offered prayer for the Church and the World, that the new year might be clothed with glory by the spread of the knowledge of Jesus.—Then followed the

EXPOSITION
PSALM 90:1-12.

1. *“Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”* Yes Jehovah, WE, Your children, can say that You have been *our* home, our safe dwelling place. And oh, what joy, what peace have we found in His sacred bosom! No home like the breast of the Lord to which, in all generations, true Believers fly. Let me ask the unbelievers where their joy is. Where has your habitation been, you Sons of Sin and Daughters of Folly?

2. *“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”* And the same God, too, loving His people, passing by their sins and remembering not their iniquities. Oh, Beloved, let this thought cheer you—He was, He is, He will be God! Here change cannot climb, here mutation must not approach. Forever and ever He is God!

3. *“You turn man to destruction. And say, Return, you children of men.”* How many this year have departed? Oh, where had we been had this been our case? Many of us can say we would have been in bliss and we should have returned unto God, but alas, many here would have entered the fires of Hell and commenced their never-ending torture!

4. *“For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.”*

5. *“You carry them away as a flood.”* Who are they who are carried away as a flood? Yourselves, my Hearers! And myself. Though we know it not, we are always in motion. The impetuous torrent of time is carrying us along like a mighty rolling river. We cannot stand against the force which drives us onwards! We are as powerless as the straw! We can, by no means, resist it! Where are we going? Where is the river carrying us? We cannot stem its torrents. We cannot escape its floods. Oh, where? Oh, where are we going?

6. *“You carry them away as with a flood. They are as a sleep—in the morning they are like grass which grows up.”*

7. *“In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers.”*

8. *“For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled.”* No man better understands this than the convicted sinner when smarting under the rod of God. Truly our strength is then utterly consumed and the troubles of our heart are enlarged!

9. *“You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance.”* Hear that! *“Our secret sins!”* Some of you bear Hell’s mark on your forehead. Some of you, like Cain, have the mark of justice

on your very brow. Your sins are beforehand with you in judgment! Ah, you are here, tonight, blabbing out the tale of your sad, sad history. But there are persons here who have “secret sins.” You have not been found out yet. The night was too dark for human eyes to see you. The deed was too secret for mortal to behold. But it is set somewhere. Just as we set a stone in a golden ring, so has God set your “secret sins in the light of *His* Countenance.” Your sins are, this night, before the eyes of the Infinite Jehovah!

10. *“For as our days are passed away in Your wrath. We spend our years as a tale that is told.”* The Vulgate translation has—“Our years pass away like those of a spider.” It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider’s web. Constituted most curiously, the spider’s web is. But what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of a human body? And what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh! And vapors are rocks compared with life!

11. *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten.”* Mark the Psalmist says, “the *days* of our years.” How seldom we think of that! Our years we think of—but not “the days of our years.”

12. *“And if [it is a great, “if,” indeed, for how many die before they attain to it!] by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow. For it is soon cut off and we fly away.”* Where do we fly to? Is it upwards that we wing our way, on more than eagles wings, to realms of joy unknown? Or is it downward that we sink with all our sins round our necks like millstones? Oh, shall we go down, down, till in Hell we lift up our eye, being in torment?

13. *“Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.”*

14. *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”* Here is heavenly arithmetic! An application of numeration seldom thought of, even by the wise. May we, during the next year, so measure out our time that we may apply our hearts to Jesus, who is true Wisdom. Amen! Lord, may that be granted!

Now we will sing a verse of that solemn hymn—

“When You, my righteous Judge, shall come,”

and then the Pastor will make an evening’s prayer for you before he comes to speak with your souls on God’s behalf.

HYMN

***“Let me among Your saints be found
Whenever the archangel’s trump shall sound,
To see Your smiling face—
Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring***

With shouts of Sovereign Grace.

PRAYER

O GOD, save my people! Save my people! A solemn charge have You given to Your servant. Ah, Lord, it is all too solemn for such a child. Help him! Help him, by Your own Grace to discharge it as he ought. O Lord, let Your servant confess that he feels that his prayers are not as earnest as they should be for his people's souls. That he does not preach so frequently as he ought with that fire, that energy, that true love to men's souls. But O Lord, damn not the hearers for the preacher's sin! Oh, destroy not the flock for the shepherd's iniquity! Have mercy on them, good Lord, have mercy on them! O Lord, have mercy on them! There are some of them, Father, that will not have mercy on themselves. How have we preached to them and labored for them! O God You know that I lie not. How have I strived for them that they might be saved! But the heart is too hard for man to melt, and the soul made of iron too hard for flesh and blood to render soft! O God, the God of Israel, only You can save! *There* is the pastor's hope. There is the minister's trust. He cannot—but You can! Lord, they will not come, but You can make them willing in the day of Your power! They will not come unto You that they may have life! But You can draw them and then they shall run after You. They cannot come. But You can give them power, for though, “no man comes except the Father draw him,” yet if He draw him, then he can come! O Lord, for another year has Your servant preached—You know how. It is not for him to plead his cause with You—that is in Another's hands and has been there, thank God, years ago! But now, O Lord, we beseech You, bless our people. Let this, our Church—Your Church—be still knit together in unity. And this night may they commence a fresh era of prayer. They *are* a praying people—blessed be Your name! And they pray for their minister with all their hearts. O Lord, help them to pray more earnestly! May we wrestle in prayer more than ever and besiege Your Throne until You make Jerusalem a praise, not only here, but everywhere! But, Father, it is not the Church we weep for. It is not the Church we groan for. It is the world! O Faithful Promiser, have You not promised to Your Son that He should not die in vain? Give Him souls, we beseech You, that He may be abundantly satisfied! Have You not promised Your Church that she shall be increased? Oh, increase her, increase her! And have You not promised that Your ministers shall not labor in vain? For You have said, that “as the rain comes down and the snow from Heaven and returns not there, but waters the earth, even so shall Your Word be—it shall not return unto You void.” Let not the Word return void, tonight, but now may Your servant, in the most earnest manner, with the

most fervent heart—burning with love to His Savior and with love to souls—preach once more the glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Come, Holy Spirit! We can do nothing without You! We solemnly invoke You, great Spirit of God! You who did rest on Abraham, on Isaac and on Jacob. You, who in the night visions, speaks unto men. Spirit of the Prophets, Spirit of the Apostles, Spirit of the Church, be You our Spirit this night—that the earth may tremble, that souls may be made to hear Your Word—and that all flesh may rejoice together to praise Your name! Unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit the dread Supreme, be everlasting praise! Amen.

SERMON

***“Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him for the life of your young children that faint for hunger at the head of every street.”
Lamentations 2:19.***

This was originally spoken to Zion when in her sad and desolate condition. Jeremiah, the weeping Prophet, had wept his eyes dry for the slain of the daughters of his people. And when he had done all he could, to pour out tears for poor Jerusalem, he then begged Jerusalem to weep for herself! I think I might become a Jeremy, tonight, and weep as he, for surely the Church at large is in almost as evil a condition! O Zion, how have you been veiled in a cloud and how is your honor trod in the dust! Arise, you sons of Zion, and weep for your mother—weep bitterly—for she has given herself to other lovers and forsaken the Lord that bought her! I bear witness this night, in the midst of this solemn assembly, that the Church at large is wickedly departing from the living God. She is leaving the Truth of God which was once her glory and she is mixing herself among the nations. Ah, Beloved, it were well if Zion could now sometimes weep. It were well if there were more who would lay to heart the wounds of the daughter of His people. How has the city become a harlot! How has the much fine gold become dim! And how has the glory departed! Zion is under a cloud. Her ministers preach not with the energy and fire that anciently dwelt in the lips of God’s servants. Neither is pure and undefiled Doctrine proclaimed in her streets. Where are her Evangelists who, with earnest hearts, traversed the land with the Gospel on their lips? Where are her Apostolic preachers who everywhere declared the good tidings of salvation? Alas for the idle shepherds! Alas for the slumbering ministers! Weep sorely, O Zion! Weep sorely, until another reformation

comes to sweep your floor!. Weep, Zion—weep until He shall come whose fan is in His hand, who shall thoroughly purge His floor! For the time is coming when judgment must begin at the House of God! Oh, that now the princes of Israel had wisdom, that they might seek the Lord! But alas, our leaders have given themselves to false doctrine! Neither do they love the thing which is right. Therefore I charge you, “Arise,” O Zion, “cry out in the night in the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

We leave Zion, however, to speak to those who need exhortation more than Zion does—to speak to those who are Zion’s enemies, or followers of Zion—and yet not belonging to her ranks—to them we shall have a word or two to say tonight.

1. First, from our text we gather *that it is never too soon to pray*. “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.” You are lying on your bed. The gracious Spirit whispers—“Arise and pray to God.” Well, there is no reason why you should delay till the morning light! “In the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.” We are told, here, that it is *never too soon to pray*. How many young persons imagine that religion is a thing for age, or at least for maturity? They conceive that while they are in the bloom of their youth, they need not attend to its admonitions. How many have we found who count religion to be a crutch for old age? They reckon it an ornament to their gray hairs, forgetting that to the young man religion is like a chain of gold around his neck and like an ornament set with precious jewels that shall array him with honor! How many are there who think it is yet too soon for them to bear, for a single moment, the Cross of Jesus? They do not want to have their young shoulders galled with an early burden. They do not think it is true that “it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.” And they forget that that “yoke is easy,” and that “burden is light.” Therefore, hour after hour and day after day the malicious fiend whispers in their ear—“It is too soon, it is too soon! Postpone, postpone, postpone! Procrastinate!” Need we tell you once more that oft-repeated axiom, “Procrastination is the thief of time”? Need we remind you that “delays are dangerous”? Need we tell you that those are the works of Satan? For the Holy Spirit, when He strives with man, says, “*Today*, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.” It is never, Beloved, too soon to pray!

Are you a child, tonight? Your God hears children! He called Samuel when he was but a child. “Samuel, Samuel,” and Samuel said, “Here am I.” We have had our Josiahs. We have heard of our Timothys. We have seen those in early youth who have been brought to the Savior. Oh, re-

member it is not too soon to seek the Savior, before you arrive at manhood! If God, in His mercy, calls you to Him, I beseech you think not for a moment that He will not hear you. I trust I know His name—more than that, I *know* I do. “I know whom I have believed.” But He did not call me too early. Though but a child, I descended into the pool of Baptism there to be buried with my Savior. Oh, I wish I could say that all those 14 or 15 years of my life had not been thrown away! Blessed be His name, He never calls us too soon! If He rises early in the morning and sends some into His vineyard to labor, He does not send them before they should go—before there is work for them to do. Young man, it is not too soon! “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

2. Again—*it is not too late to cry to the Lord.* For if the sun is set and the watches of the night have commenced their rounds, the Mercy Seat is open. No shop is open so late as the House of Mercy. The devil has two tricks with men. Sometimes he puts their clock a little backward and he says, “Stop, there is time enough.” And when that does not work, he turns the hands up and he cries out, “Too late! Too late!” Old man, has the devil said, “It is too late”? Convicted sinner, has Satan said, “It is too late”? Troubled, distressed one, has the thought risen in your soul—a bitter and a dark one—“It is too late”? It is not! Within another 15 minutes, another year shall have come. But if the Spirit of God calls you this year, He will not call you too late in the year! If to the last second you should live, if God the Holy Spirit calls you, then, He will not have called you too late! Ah, you desponding ones, who think it is all too late. It is not—

***“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner that returns”***

shall find mercy and peace! There have been some older than you can be—some as sinful and vile and heinously wicked—who have provoked God as much, who have sinned against Him as frequently—and yet, by His Grace, they have found pardon! If He calls you, Sinner, if He calls you tonight, 12 o’clock is not too late, as 1 o’clock is not too early! If He calls you, whether it is at midnight, or cockcrowing, or noonday, we would say to you, as they did to the blind man, “Arise. He calls you.” And as sure as ever He calls you, He will not send you away without a blessing! It is not too late to call on God! The darkness of night is gathering. It is coming on and you are near to death. Arise, Sleeper, arise! You who are now taking the last nap of death, “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

3. Next—we cannot pray too vehemently, for the text says, “Arise, cry out in the night.” God loves earnest prayers. He loves impetuous prayers—vehement prayers. Let a man preach, if he dare, coldly and slowly, but never let him pray so! God loves crying-out prayers! There is a poor fellow who says, “I don’t know how to pray.” “Why, Sir,” he says, “I could not put six or seven words together in English grammar.” Tush upon English grammar! God does not care for that, as long as you pour out your heart. That is enough. *Cry out* before Him! “Ah,” says one, “I have been supplicating to God. I think I have asked for mercy.” But perhaps you have not cried out. *Cry out* before God. I have often heard men say they have prayed and have not been heard. And I have known the reason—they have asked amiss if they have asked. And those who cry with weak voices, who do not cry aloud, must not expect to get a blessing. When you go to Mercy’s gate, let me give you a little advice. Do not go and give a gentle tap, like a lady. Do not give a single knock, like a beggar. But take the knocker and rap hard, till the very door seems to shake! Rap with all your might! And remember that God loves those who knock hard at Mercy’s gate. “Knock and it shall be opened unto you.” I picture that scene at midnight, which our Savior mentioned in the parable—it will suit the present occasion. A certain man wanted some bread. A friend of his on a journey had come to his house and was very faint and needed bread to eat. So off he went to his next door neighbor and rapped at his door, but no one came. He stood beneath the window and called out his friend’s name. His friend answered from the top of the house, where he had been lying asleep, “My wife and children are with me in bed and I cannot rise and give to you.” But the man did not care about that! His poor friend needed bread, so he called out aloud—“It is bread I need and bread I must have!” I fancy I see the man lying and sleeping there. He says, “I shan’t get up. It is very cold tonight. How can you expect me to rise and go down stairs to get bread for you? I won’t. I can’t. I shan’t.” So he wraps himself very comfortably, again, and lays down to sleep once more. What does the man down below do? Oh, I still hear him—“Awake, Sir! I must have it! I will have it! My friend is starving.” “Go home, you fellow! Don’t disturb me this time of night.” “I must have bread! Why don’t you come and let me have it?” says the other. But the friend, vexed and angry, lies down on his bed. Still at the door there comes a heavier and a heavier rap and the man still shouts—“Bread, Sir, bread! You will not sleep all night till you come down and give it to me!” And verily I say unto you, though he will not rise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as much as he needs! “Arise, cry out in the night,” and God will

hear you, if you cry out with all your soul and pour out your heart before Him.

4. And now our last remark—*we cannot pray too simply*. Just hear how the Psalmist has it—“pour out *your hearts* before Him.” Not, “pour out your fine words.” No, “pour out your beautiful periods,” but, “pour out *your hearts*.” “I dare not,” says one—“there is black filth in my heart.” Out with it, then—it is better out than in. “I cannot,” says another, “it would not run freely.” Pour it out, Sir. Pour it all out—like water! Do you not notice something in this? Some men say—“I cannot pray as I could wish. My crying out is a feeble one.” Well, when you pour out water, it does not make much noise. So you can pour out your heart like water and it will run away and you will scarcely know it. There are many prayers uttered in an attic that nobody has heard—but stop!—Gabriel heard it! God, Himself, heard it! There is many a cry down in a cellar, or up in an attic, or some lonely place where the cobbler sits mending his shoes beneath a window—which the world does not hear but the Lord hears it! Pour out your heart like water. How does water run out? The quickest way it can—that’s all. It never thinks much about how it runs. That is the way the Lord loves to have it! Some of your gentry offer prayers which are poured out, drop after drop, and must be brought to a grand, ecclesiastical, prayer-book shape. Now, take your heart and pour it out like water. “What?” says one, “with all the oaths in it?” Yes. “With all my old sins in it?” Yes. Pour out your heart like water. Pour it out by confessing all your sins. Pour it out by begging the Lord to have mercy upon you for Christ’s sake! Pour it out like water. And when it is all poured out, He will come and fill it again with “wines on the lees, well refined.” “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.”

Thus do I speak to all who will acknowledge themselves to be sinners in the sight of God—but even these must have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable them to cry out—O my Lord, grant it!

And now, dear Friends, may Grace be given unto you that you may be able to pour out your hearts this night! Remember, my Hearers, it may seem a light thing for us to assemble tonight at such an hour, but listen for one moment to the ticking of that clock! [Here, the preacher paused and amid solemn silence, everyone heard the clock with its tick, tick, tick.] It is the beating of the pulse of eternity. You hear the ticking of that clock?—It is the footstep of Death pursuing you! Each time the clock ticks, Death’s footsteps are falling on the ground close behind you. You will soon enter another year. This year will have gone in a few seconds. 1855 is almost gone—where will the next year be spent, my Friends? This one has been spent on earth—where will you spend the next? “In

Heaven!” says one, “I trust.” Another murmurs, “Perhaps I shall spend mine in Hell!” Ah, solemn is the thought, but before that clock strikes 12, some here may be in Hell! And, blessed be the name of God, some of us may be in Heaven! But O, do you know how to estimate your time, my Hearers? Do you know how to measure your days? Oh, I have not words to speak, tonight! Do you know that every hour, you are nearing the tomb? That every hour, you are nearing judgment? That the archangel is flapping his wings every second of your life and, trumpet at his mouth, is approaching you? Do you not know that you do not live stationary lives, but always going on, on, on, towards the grave? Do you know where the stream of life is hastening some of you? To the rapids—to the rapids of woe and destruction! What shall the end of those be who obey not the Gospel of God? You will not have so many hours to live as you had last year! See the man who has but a few shillings in his pocket—how he takes them out and spends them, one by one? Now he has but a few coppers and there is so much for that tiny candle, so much for that piece of bread. He counts the articles out, one by one—and so the money goes gradually from his pocket. Oh, if you knew how poor you are, some of you! You think there is no bottom to your pockets. You think you have a boundless store of time—but you have not!

As the Lord lives, there is a young man here that has not more than one year to live! And yet he is spending all that he is worth, in time, in sin—in folly and vice! Some of you have not that to live. And yet how are you spending your time? O take care! Take care! Time is precious! And whenever we have little of it, it is more precious! It is most precious! May God help you to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven! I feel like the angel, tonight, who put his hand upon Lot and cried—“Escape! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain—flee to the mountain, lest you be consumed!”

And now, I appreciate the power of silence. You will please observe strict and solemn silence until the striking of that clock. And let each one spend the time as he pleases. [It was now two minutes to twelve and profound silence reigned, save where sobs and groans could be distinctly heard from penitent lips seeking the Savior. The clock having struck, Mr. Spurgeon continued—] You are now where you never were before. And you never will be, again, where you have been tonight. Now we have had a solemn meeting and let us have a cheerful ending of it. As we go away, let us sing a sweet hymn to encourage our hearts.

[A hymn was then sung.]

Now may the Lord bless you and lift up the light of His Countenance upon you and give you peace! May you, during this year of Grace receive much Grace. And may you proceed onwards towards Heaven! And may

we, as a Church, as members of Churches, as ministers, as deacons, mutually strive together for the faith of Jesus and be edified therein! And may the Lord save the ungodly! If the last year is clean gone and they are not yet pardoned and forgiven, let not another year roll away without their finding mercy!

The Lord dismiss you all with His sweet blessing, for His blessed Son's sake, Amen. And may the love of Jesus Christ, the Grace of His Father and the fellowship of His blessed Spirit be yours, my Beloved, if you know Christ, world without end. Amen.

Now, my Friends, in the highest and best sense, I wish you all a happy new year.

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.**

SATAN'S ARROWS AND GOD'S NO. 3262

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1911.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1864.***

***“He has bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow. He
has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my soul.”
Lamentations 3:12, 13.***

JEREMIAH did not intend these verses to be a description of a sinner under conviction of sin. He was sorrowing over the woes of Jerusalem and the nation that had been so heavily punished for its sin, yet we may rightly apply his words to the most bitter of all human griefs—I mean, of all human griefs except that ruinous remorse which sometimes comes at the prelude of eternal destruction!

Dear Friends, when we preach to you, we do, as it were, shoot arrows at a mark but, alas, how few of them ever reach the target! If any of our arrows are shot without earnestness and zeal, they are almost certain to fall short of the mark. How sad it is that any of us who are sent by God to do such important work as this, should be cold-hearted or lukewarm! Shame on the preacher who does not bend the bow with all his might and throw his whole strength of spirit, soul and body into his efforts to win souls! At times our arrows fly too high. Perhaps we use expressions which our hearers do not understand, or do not talk sufficiently concerning the simplicities of the Gospel. In such a case we ought to repent and be grieved with ourselves that we have not better carried out our commission and so adapted the means we have used as to achieve the end we ought to have had in view. But even when we aim aright and put our whole force into the drawing of the bow, how often do our arrows glint off the steel armor of indifference in which so many of our hearers are encased from head to toe! The point of the arrow is blunted, or the shaft is snapped as we shoot again and again at those who try to prevent the entrance of the Truth of God into their hearts. Year after year I have drawn my bow at some of you—I have used the sharpest arrows and the most polished shafts that my quiver could supply—and have thrown my whole strength into the effort, yet, up till now no arrow has pierced your hearts or reached your soul. But how different is the case when God Himself draws the bow! Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, His arrows never miss their mark! The joint in the sinner's harness is always visible to Him, and though it is but a very small opening which no one else can see, between the plates of the armor the arrow unerringly enters! God knows how to wound mortally, too. As the text reminds us, the arrow is driven right in-

to one's soul—into those parts of our being where the vital principle is most active—so that there is no hope of escape from the arrows which God sends right into the heart, the soul, the conscience of the one at whom He shoots His shafts.

As God shall enable me, by his Holy Spirit, I intend to describe the case of those who have been pierced by God's arrows. But I want, first, to speak of some arrows which do not come from God's quiver at all, but which, nevertheless, cause very much pain to some sensitive spirits. So, first, I am going to try to break the devil's arrows! Secondly, to endeavor to describe God's arrows. And then, thirdly, to seek to comfort those who have been wounded by these arrows.

I. First, then, I am TO TRY TO BREAK SOME OF THE DEVIL'S ARROWS.

I will venture to say that nine out of ten of the terrible feelings which men have when under conviction of sin are not the work of God's Spirit, but are the result of the uprising of their own unbelief stirred and agitated by the diabolic suggestions of Satan. He knows that it is "now or never" with them—if he can now drive them to despair and keep them from coming to Christ, he will have gained his end. But if now the anxious soul should find shelter and rest in the Atonement of Christ, the Prince of Darkness will have lost it forever and, therefore, he exerts all his power and stirs up all his fellow fiends to do their utmost to keep the poor soul in despair!

One of the arrows which the devil shoots at such a time is this is that he says to the troubled soul, "*Your sins are so great that it is not possible for God to forgive you. You have sinned so grossly and so long—remember your sin on such-and-such a day and on such-and-such a night? If you had not committed such-and-such a sin, you might have been forgiven, but now there is no hope for you! Besides, think of the many ways in which your offenses have been aggravated. You have sinned against light and knowledge—though you have often been re-proved, you have hardened your neck and you shall surely be destroyed—and that without remedy. Your case is utterly hopeless.*" Now, although part of Satan's speech is quoted from the Scriptures, I dare to affirm that this arrow never came out of God's quiver! That quotation has no reference to one who sincerely repents of sin and comes to God seeking mercy for Jesus' sake. However great your guilt may have been, remember that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." If you had gone as far in sin as Satan, himself, could have led you, that great promise of the Lord Jesus Christ would still have been available for you, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto man." If the guilt of a thousand sinners had been concentrated in you, yet still, if you did but wash in the—

***"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins"—***

there is potency enough in that precious blood to make you whiter than the newly-fallen snow! O poor troubled one, let this arrow be broken in

pieces once and for all! Let the thought of God's everlasting mercy and His boundless power to forgive snap it in two and cast it to the ground!

Another of the devil's arrows which often goes whizzing through the air is this—*"The Holy Spirit cannot soften such a hard heart as yours. You cannot repent as a sinner should do—sin has got too firm a hold upon you. Why, you know that you can listen to a most earnest discourse and yet not be in the least impressed by it! Or if you are for a time moved by the message, you soon go back to your sin as the dog returns to his vomit and as the sow that was washed goes back to her wallowing in the mire. There is no tenderness left in you! Your conscience is seared as with a hot iron! The Holy Spirit is powerless to do anything in such a case as yours."* That is another lie—a gross and slanderous lie! What is there that the Holy Spirit cannot do? O my Brothers and Sisters, when anyone is talking about what the Deity can do, the word, "powerless," must never be mentioned! Even the word, "difficult," is not to be put side by side with the name of God! "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear." Why, one drop of Jesus' precious blood could melt a mountain of ice as huge as a million worlds! One flash of the Holy Spirit's celestial fire could make a rock of granite run like the water that gushed from the smitten Rock in the wilderness! There is no doubt about the hardness of your heart and the badness of your nature—you are probably much worse than you think are—but it is impossible that your depravity could exceed the potency of the Holy Spirit's influence to renew your nature and change your whole life! So let this diabolical arrow also be smashed to atoms so that even the devil, himself, cannot use it again!

Here is another shot from Satan's quiver. The devil says to the poor troubled soul, "It is too late for you to repent. If you had repented and turned to God years ago, you might have been saved. When you were a young man, you had your day of Grace, but that is now over. Do you not remember being in a certain Chapel one Sunday night when the minister was so earnestly pleading with sinners and many were smitten down under conviction of sin? You also seemed to be impressed, but your anxiety was all gone in the morning—so you missed your opportunity and now the gates of Heaven are shut against you forever! You may seek the Lord, but you shall not find Him! You may call upon Him, but He will not answer you." That is another of Satan's lies, for there is no man living who has arrived at a period when it is too late for God to save him! We rightly sing—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."***

Did not Christ save the dying thief? He was fastened to a cross and was soon to die, but when he repented of his sin and pleaded with Christ to remember him, he received the gracious assurance that he should be *that day* with Christ in Paradise! If old age could keep men out of Heaven, there are many now before the Throne of God who would never have

been there! If you are seventy, or eighty, or even 90 years of age, it is a sad and solemn thing that you should have lived so long without Christ—but this is no reason why you should die and be damned! God's message to you is still this, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?" The commission to Christ's servants is still the same as when He gave it to His first disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"—not merely to every creature—under 50 years of age, but to everyone of the whole human race! If you are over a 100 years old, yet, as you are a creature, I have to preach the Gospel to you and the Gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!" So, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, however great your age may be, or however many times you may have refused to believe on Him, there is no doubt about God's willingness and power to still receive, pardon and accept you!

Another of Satan's arrows is this. He whispers in a sinner's ear, "*You are not one of God's elect.* You are shut out of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is no use for you to think of being saved—a stern decree has blotted out all possibility of hope for you." But how does the devil know that? This is one of the things that God has never revealed to *anyone*, and I am sure that Satan has never been allowed to read the names in the Lamb's Book of Life, so do not let this arrow trouble you for a moment! Why should not you be one of God's elect as well as any other man? Have you been a drunk? Many drunks have been saved in spite of their drunkenness! Have you been addicted to profane swearing? There are many who once uttered the foulest oaths, but who were afterwards washed in the precious blood of Christ—and who are now singing the new song before the Throne of God in Glory! Have you been a willing servant of the devils? There are many who long served him here below, who are now playing their golden harps in the Presence of God above! You cannot tell whether you are one of the elect or not until you believe in Jesus—when you do *that*, you will have positive proof that God chose you unto salvation and gave you to His Son long before He formed the world! The Doctrine of Election is not one about which you need trouble yourself just now. Begin to read your Bible and the Gospel according to Matthew, and see there how you are bid to repent and invited to come to Christ. When you have done that, you can go on to the Epistles and read about election and all the other Doctrines of Grace, but your first business is to repent of sin and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

I have also known Satan whisper to a man, "*It is no use for you to pray.* You know that you have been praying for a long time, but you have got no comfort from it, so give it up, for it is an utterly useless exercise! It is no use for you to believe. There was a man the other day who said that he believed, but he was just as great a sinner afterward, so what good is it for you to believe?" Here again we have Satan's lies set in contrast with God's Truth. It is of great use for everyone to pray, for our Savior said, "Everyone that asks, receives and he that seeks, finds. And to him that knocks, it shall be opened." There is not one case of true prayer that is

exempt from this general rule! Then as to Satan's assertion that there are some who say that they have believed and yet they are not saved, we can reply that it is one thing to *say* that we believe, but quite another thing to really believe! No doubt there are some who say that they believe who are no better for it, but it is equally true that, "he that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Faith does justify the soul—"being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So will you believe Satan's lie or God's Truth?

I do not know what other arrows the devil may have shot at any of you. He may, perhaps have told you that *you have committed the unpardonable sin*, but that is certainly more than he knows. If you now desire to be saved, you may depend upon it that you have *not* committed that sin which is unto death! And if you are now believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the best possible proof that this sin cannot be laid to your charges, for whomever believes in Him is not condemned, but has everlasting life! Cling to the Cross of Christ and you shall never sink down to Perdition.

II. Having thus tried to break some of the devil's arrows, I want, next, TO ENDEAVOR TO DESCRIBE SOME OF GOD'S ARROWS.

Here I will give you a piece of my own experience. When God began to deal with me, one of the first arrows that flew right into my heart was this, "You God see me." I recollected that *God knew all about my sins*, that He had seen them or heard them, and had noted them all down in His Book of Remembrance. I was greatly alarmed, for I had forgotten many of them and had dreamed that God also had forgotten them.

Then came another arrow, bearing this motto, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." I realized that *God knew all about my motives and thoughts*. He had seen my selfishness when I was seeking to do what was right merely that I might be saved by it. He had watched all the wanderings of my heart, and all the evil imaginations of my mind—and I was almost driven to despair as I thought what must be the fruit of my doings!

Then came another sharp arrow and it was labeled thus, "*The soul that sins, it shall die.*" I knew that I had sinned and I felt that I must die, for the Law can show no mercy—it can only punish the guilty. Then I heard that terrible sentence, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." Then was I sorely afraid, like Belshazzar was when he saw the mysterious handwriting on the wall!

Then came another arrow bearing this inscription, "*Your commandment is exceedingly broad,*" and I began to see that the Law of the Lord was much more than I had thought it to be. I had fancied that if I kept the letter of the commandments, I would be accounted innocent, but I found that the commandment which said, "You shall not kill," meant that if I hated my brother, I would be a murderer! And that, "You shall

not commit adultery” not only referred to that shameful act, but also included the lascivious look and the unclean thought! Ah, me, where was all my fancied righteousness, then? In view of the spirituality of God's Holy Law, I might well say with Moses at Sinai, “I exceedingly fear and quake.”

Another arrow that came to me was marked, “*Without Me you can do nothing.*” I found that by my own unaided power, I could not pray, I could not repent, I could not believe—but there I lay, as helpless as the dirt beneath my feet—and with no more power to save myself than a sere leaf driven by the blast of a tornado would have had!

Ah, these were sharp arrows, indeed, and just when I seemed covered with wounds all over me, I thought I had another arrow shot into me bearing this terrible message, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” When I went to sleep, I determined that I was in Hell—and when I woke up, I wondered that the earth did not open and swallow up such a sinner as I felt myself to be! Life became almost unbearable to me.

Then there came another arrow which caused me to suffer still more. It bore this missive, “*You have sinned against light and knowledge.* You were not ignorant, as many lads were, of what you ought to do. You had received gracious instruction and you knew what the Gospel was! You sinned against your father's prayers and your mother's tears.” I recollected the Sunday evenings at home when my mother had prayed with me and pleaded with me to lay hold on eternal life, yet I had still refused to turn to God and to trust in Jesus as my Savior—and this thought came to my mind, “It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you.” Thus did the arrows of God's quiver enter into my soul!

These are God's arrows and the messages they bear are all true. It is true that God sees us. It is true that He reads our thoughts and motives. It is true that He punishes sin. It is true that His commandments are exceedingly broad. It is true that we are powerless to save ourselves. And if, my dear Hearers, you are feeling the force of any of these Truths of God, I congratulate you that God has thus made you a mark for His arrows!

III. Now, thirdly, I want TO SEEK TO COMFORT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WOUNDED BY THESE ARROWS.

My dear afflicted Friends, thus troubled and distressed in mind, please consider why God sends these arrows to you. Remember that they are not sent to destroy you, but to save you—and to save you by destroying some things of which you are very fond! They are sent, first of all, to destroy your false peace. God cannot bear that you should say, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace and, therefore, He shoots these arrows to kill your carnal ease that you may be stirred up to seek His face. They are also sent to slay your self-righteousness—and they are blessed arrows that can do that! When Mr. Hervey asked a poor farmer what was the hardest thing to get rid of, he expected him to answer, “Sinful self.” But the reply was, “Righteous self.” And certainly, of the two, *righteous*

self is much harder to part with than sinful self. These arrows are also sent to kill your strength. Remember, Sinner, when you can do nothing, then God will do everything! When you are so completely emptied that you have nothing left, God will give you everything! If you wish to save yourselves, do it, but God will have no share in the work under such conditions. If He is to save you, He must be Alpha and Omega—He must have all the praise because He gives all the power!

Next, as God's name and Nature are both Love, *He cannot take any pleasure in seeing you suffer.* He has a purpose in setting you as a mark for His arrows. He has a design in causing the arrows of His quiver to enter your soul. He does not wound you out of ill-will toward you, but He is aiming at your good all the while. So thank Him for shooting at you and beg Him not to spare any of His arrows, but to keep on shooting until He has killed the last relic of evil and self-righteousness that has kept you from coming to Christ!

Further, *do not imagine that you are the first person who has suffered in this way.* All the people of God, in their measure, pass through a similar experience. If they do not become God's target at the time of their conversion, they find that His quiver is emptied against them sooner or later. Therefore, my poor wounded Brother or Sister, look upon your pathway as being the pathway of the saints—it is the King's Highway which has been trodden by the pilgrims to Heaven in all ages!

Once more, *you are one of those who are especially invited in this blessed Book.* Listen—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden"—that must mean you! "And I will give you, rest." This is what you need. "Ho, everyone that thirsts"—that means you! "Come you to the waters, and he that has no money"—that means you! "Come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Whoever will"—that must mean you, for you are willing enough to be saved—"let him take the water of life freely."

If you cannot get any comfort out of these invitations because you fear you are not the person described in them, remember that *there is a general call given in the Gospel.* Not only are we invited to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and bid to repent of sin, but as Paul said at Athens, "God now commands all men everywhere to repent." Be thankful that it is not too late for you to obey that command! The door of Heaven is not yet closed against you! The gate of Hell has not yet been fastened as your eternal prison—you are still on praying ground and on pleading terms with God—so "seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Above all, my dear Hearers, *remember that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"*—sinners, mark you—not the righteous, the good, the excellent, but the sinful, the bad, the guilty! God loved not men because of their goodness. Christ bought not men because of their moral

beauty. The Holy Spirit quickened not those who were already alive—but “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” and “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Look by faith, Sinner, to Him as He hung upon the Cross! It is God’s eternal Son, “very God of very God,” who died there, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Recollect how He cried, “It is finished,” before He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. What was finished? Why, the road from Hell to Heaven! The pathway along which the vilest sinner may travel to Glory—the Fountain in which the most scarlet sins may be washed away—the Redemption by which the bond-slaves of sin and Satan are forever set at liberty! All this and more than this was finished on Calvary! And if you will trust in Jesus now, a finished salvation shall be yours this very moment! May the Holy Spirit enable you, just as you are, to rest upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will find that He who wounded you with His arrows, shall heal you by His Grace, and you shall be His forever and ever! God grant it, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LAMENTATIONS 3:1-35; JEREMIAH 31:22-37.**

I am about to read a portion of Holy Scripture which may seem very strange to some of you, but it belongs to a part of the congregation, and I hope it may be the means of giving them comfort. I read it as a picture of the suffering of a soul under a sense of sin. I think it is a most graphic portrait of a heart that is awakened and made to feel its lost estate. If there are any such here, they will be sure to see themselves in the picture.

Verse 1. *I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.* It is a mistake that most souls make when in trouble, to suppose that no others ever felt as they do. John Bunyan describes Christian as being very much comforted by hearing someone quoting Scripture as he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for then he perceived that there were others in the same case with his own. Do not think, poor troubled Soul, that no one was ever so broken in pieces as you are—your path of sorrow is a well-trodden one,

2. *He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light.* A Hebrew method of saying that it was a thick darkness without any light, either star-light or moon-light. You who have passed through this state of conviction know what it means—no comfort from ordinances, no comfort from God’s Word, no comfort from your daily mercies. Every stream of comfort seems dried up to you—and sin lies heavily upon you.

3. *Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day.* As if when a man is about to strike, he smites not with his open hand but turns his hand, so the Prophet says God did with him. He felt that he was being smitten with the heaviest blows that God seemed able to give.

4. *My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones.* As men through excessive grief sometimes appear to grow prematurely aged, so the Prophet says he had gone through grief. He felt as if his bones were broken. The sore vexations of his spirit had dashed the solid pillars of the house of Manhood from their place.

5. *He has built against me, and compassed me with gall and travel.* That is to say, as the besiegers erected a mound against a city and threw up earthworks, so the Prophet says God seemed to have thrown up earthworks from which He might fire off the great guns of the Law against him.

6. *He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old.* As though he had to live in a tomb, where neither life nor light could come to him.

7. *He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy.* "My way seems blocked up, nothing prospers with me." As the convict sometimes drags about his chain, and has a ball at his foot, so the Prophet felt as if God had clogged him with a heavy chain so that he could not move because of its terrible weight.

8. *Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.* Which was the worst trial of all!

9. *He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He has made my paths crooked.* It was believed that hewn stones made the strongest wall as the joints would the more closely fit into one another. Jeremiah seems to speak as if God had taken care and trouble to build, not as men do roughly with common stones, but with polished and well-shapen troubles built like strong barriers in his way.

10. *He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places.* He felt as if the Justice of God was about to spring upon him. He was afraid to move, lest the couched lion should leap upon him and tear him to pieces. John Bunyan, in his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, describes in his own experience precisely what the Prophet here speaks of.

11-13. *He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my soul.* And all this while, to aggravate his grief, he found no comfort anywhere.

14. *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.* It is just so with a man who is under a sense of sin. His companions ask him why he is so melancholy. He has an attack of the mopes, they say. They do not want his society, they will chase him from their midst. I marvel not that they want not his company, for well do I know that he wants not theirs, but this adds much to his grief, to find that they make derision and laughter of his woe.

15. *He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood.* What a strong expression the Prophet uses! As a drunken man has lost his wits and staggers he knows not where, even as is a sin-

ner when he really begins to taste the bitterness of sin. He does not act as if he were endowed with reason—despair and sorrow have driven his senses away.

16. *He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He has covered me with ashes.* The Easterns usually baked their cakes on the hearth and very frequently there would be in the cakes pieces of grit, perhaps large lumps of cinder and sometimes small gravel stones, which would break the teeth. “So,” the Prophet seems to say, “when I went to try to get some nourishment by the eating of bread, I was disappointed—my teeth were broken with gravel stones.” I remember when I used to go up to the House of God to try to get comfort, but instead thereof, I came away more wretched than I went—for sin, that great devouring dragon, still followed me everywhere.

17-21. *And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope are perished from the LORD: remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* [See Sermon #654, Volume 11—MEMORY—THE HAND-MAID OF HOPE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Notice the gracious change that has taken place, as if the sun had risen after the blackness and gloom of the night! Now the birds of joy begin to sing and the flowers of hope begin to open their golden cups.

22. *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassion fails not.* Bad as our state is, we are not yet in Hell—we are not yet beyond the reach of hope!

23. *They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.* We had new mercies this morning, and we have had fresh mercies this evening. God has not forgotten us! The very breath in our nostrils is a proof of His goodness to us. Let us, therefore, dear Friends, still hope for yet further favors from Him!

24, 25. *The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.* [See Sermon #2436, Volume 41—“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Can you get a hold of this blessed Truth of God, any of you troubled ones who are here? Broken-hearted Sinner, can you get a grip of this comforting assurance? If so, there will soon be peace for you!

26, 27. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. [See Sermon #1291, Volume 22—THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] For this yoke, though it may seem to be very heavy for a time, when it has humbled us and brought us to Christ, will bring us innumerable blessings!

28-33. *He sits alone and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust so there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the LORD will not cast off forever: but though He causes grief, yet will He have com-*

passion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Unless He has some gracious motive for it, He never afflicts or grieves them, and when He does act thus, it is as when a father smites his child. It is because it must be done and not because he loves to do it. See, then, the great mercy of God! May it lead the sinner to repentance, yes, and lead us all to put our trust in the Lord!

[The following Exposition is the concluding portion of the one published with Sermon #3261, Volume 57—THE COVENANT—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

The passage here expounded is Jeremiah 31:22-37.

Jeremiah 31:22. *For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. Here is a prophecy of the birth of Immanuel, God With Us, born of a woman by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Mary was indeed blessed among women and we rejoice in that Man who was thus miraculously born to be the Savior, Christ the Lord.*

23-20. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. There are good times in store for Israel! Jerusalem shall then be the “habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”*

26. *Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me. Jeremiah woke up with a pleasant impression of his vision upon him, and well he might, for was there ever a more blessed one than that of which we have just read?*

27, 28. *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, says the LORD. All the ingenuity of Heaven seems to be taxed to bless Believers! And just as man sought out many inventions for evil, God, in His Infinite Love and Mercy seeks out many inventions for the good of His people.*

29, 30. *In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. We live under a personal dispensation—there is no such thing as hereditary godliness or salvation by proxy! Every man must for himself repent, and for himself believe. Vain and foolish is the idea that because we have had Christian parents, therefore we also are Christians!*

31, 32. *Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an Husband unto them, says the LORD.* What bliss it is to know about this new Covenant! Let us notice its tenor.

33. *But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*—[See Sermons #1687, Volume 28—THE LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART and #2992, Volume 52—GOD'S WRITING UPON MAN'S HEART—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Not on the tablets of stone, not on the walls of the Church, but "I will write it in their hearts"*—

33. *And will be their God, and they shall be My people.* You may have heard it said that Christ will not leave His people, but that His people may leave Him—but in this promise the second contingency is provided for as well as the first!

34-37. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus says the LORD, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of Hosts is His name: If those ordinances depart from before Me says the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever. Thus says the LORD, If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the LORD.* What a God of Infinite Mercy He is!

—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.**

MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE

NO. 654

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 15, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.”
Lamentations 3:21.*

MEMORY is very often the servant of despondency. Despairing minds call to remembrance every dark foreboding in the past and every gloomy feature in the present. Memory stands like a handmaiden clothed in sack-cloth, presenting to her master a cup of mingled gall and wormwood. Like Mercury, she hastens with winged heel to gather fresh thorns with which to fill the uneasy pillow and to bind fresh rods with which to scourge the already bleeding heart. There is, however, no necessity for this. Wisdom will transform Memory into an angel of comfort.

That same recollection which may, in its left hand, bring so many dark and gloomy omens, may be trained to bear in its right hand a wealth of hopeful signs! She need not wear a crown of iron. She may encircle her brow with a fillet of gold, all spangled with stars! When Christian, according to Bunyan, was locked up in Doubting Castle, Memory formed the crab-tree club with which the famous giant beat his captives so terribly. They remembered how they had left the right road, how they had been warned not to do so and how in rebellion against their better selves they wandered into By-Path Meadow.

They remembered all their past misdeeds, their sins, their evil thoughts and evil words—and all these were so many knots in the club—causing sad bruises and wounds in their poor suffering persons. But one night, according to Bunyan, this same Memory which had scourged them, helped to set them free—for she whispered something in Christian’s ear and he cried out as one half amazed, “What a fool am I 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.” So he put his hand into his bosom and with much joy he plucked out the key and thrust it into the lock.

And though the lock of the great iron gate, as Bunyan says, “went damnable hard,” yet the key did open it, and all the others, too. And so, by this blessed act of memory, poor Christian and Hopeful were set free! Observe that the text records an act of memory on the part of Jeremiah—“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” In the previous verse he tells us that memory had brought him to despair—“My soul has them still in remembrance and is humbled in me.” And now he tells us that this same memory brought him to life and comfort yet again—“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.”

We lay it down, then, as a general principle, that if we would exercise our memories a little more, we might, in our very deepest and darkest distress, strike a match which would instantaneously kindle the lamp of comfort! There is no need for God to create a new thing in order to restore Believers to joy. If they would prayerfully rake the ashes of the past they would find light for the present. And if they would turn to the Book of Truth and the Throne of Grace, their candle would soon shine as before. I shall apply that general principle to the cases of three persons.

I. First of all, to THE BELIEVER WHO IS IN DEEP TROUBLE. This is no unusual position for an heir of Glory. A Christian man is seldom long at ease—the Believer in Jesus Christ through much tribulation inherits the kingdom. If you will kindly turn to the chapter which contains our text, you will observe a list of matters which recollection brought before the mind of the Prophet Jeremiah and which yielded him comfort.

First stands the fact that however deep may be our present affliction, it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed. This is a low beginning, certainly. The comfort is not very great, but when a very weak man is at the bottom of the pyramid, if he is ever to climb it, you must not set him a long step at first. Give him but a small stone to step upon, the first time, and when he gets more strength, *then* he will be able to take a greater stride. Now, consider, you sons of sorrow, where you *might* have been!

Look down now through the gloomy portals of the grave to that realm of darkness which is as the valley of the shadow of death—full of confusion and without any order. Can you discern the sound as of the rushing to and fro of hosts of guilty and tormented spirits? Do you hear their dolorous wailing and their fearful gnashing of teeth? Can your ears endure to hear the clanking of their chains, or your eyes to see the fury of the flames? They are forever, forever, forever shut out from the Presence of God, and shut in with devils and despair!

They lie in flames of misery so terrible that the dream of a despairing maniac cannot realize their woe. God has cast them away and pronounced His curse upon them, appointing them blackness of darkness forever. This might have been *your* lot. Contrast your present position with theirs and you have cause rather to sing, than to lament! “Why should a *living* man complain?” Have you seen those foul dungeons of Venice? They are below the water-mark of the canal! To get to them you must wind through narrow, dark, stifling passages. Then you creep into little cells in which a man can scarcely stand upright where no ray of sunlight has ever entered since the foundations of the palace were laid! They are cold, foul and black with damp and mildew—the fit nursery of fever and abode of death!

And yet those places were luxury to inhabit compared with the everlasting burnings of Hell! It were an excess of luxury to lost spirits if they could lie there with moss growing on their eyelids, in lonely misery—if they might but escape for a little season from a guilty conscience and the wrath of God! Friend, you are neither in those dungeons nor yet in Hell! Therefore pluck up courage and say, “It is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

Slender comfort this may be, but then, if this flame shall yield but little heat, it may lead to something better. When you are kindling your household fire before which you hope to sit down with comfort—you do not first expect to kindle the lumps of coal—you set some lighter fuel in a blaze and soon the more solid material yields a genial glow. So this thought, which may seem so light to you, may be as the kindling of a heavenly fire of comfort for you who now are shivering in your grief. Something better awaits us, for Jeremiah reminds us that there are some mercies, at any rate, which are still continued. “His compassions fail not, they are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.”

You are very poor and have come down for wealth. This is very difficult, still you are in good health. Just walk into the hospital, ask to be permitted to witness the work done in the operating room. Sit down by one bedside and listen to the story of pain and weariness, and surely you will leave the hospital feeling, “I thank God that with all my poverty I have not sickness to complain of and therefore I will sing of the mercies which I enjoy.”

Are you sick and have you dragged your weary body to this house this morning? Then I shall invite you to accompany me to those dark cellars and miserable attics where poverty pines away in wretched unpitied obscurity in the heart of this great city. And if you note the hard-earned meal too scant to yield sufficient refreshment, and the miserable heap of straw which is their only rest, you will escape from the foul den of filthy penury and say, “I will bear my sickness, for even that is better than filth, starvation and nakedness.”

Evil your plight may be, but there are others in a still worse condition. You can always, if you open your eyes and choose to do so, see at least this cause for thankfulness—that you are not yet plunged into the lowest depth of misery. There is a very touching little story told of a poor woman with two children who had not a bed for them to lie upon and scarcely any clothes to cover them. In the depth of winter they were nearly frozen and the mother took the door of a cellar off the hinges and set it up before the corner where they crouched down to sleep that some of the draft and cold might be kept from them.

One of the children whispered to her when she complained of how badly off they were, “Mother, what do those dear little children do who have no cellar door to put up in front of them?” Even there, you see, the little heart found cause for thankfulness. And we, if we are driven to our worst extremity, will still honor God by thanking Him that His compassions fail not but are new every morning. This, again, is not a very high step—but still it is a little in advance over the other—and the weakest may readily reach it.

The chapter offers us a third source of consolation. “The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore will I hope in Him.” You have lost much Christian, but you have not lost your portion. Your God is your All—therefore, if you have lost all but God—still you have your all left since God is All. The text does not say that God is a *part* of our portion, but the

whole portion of our spirit! In Him we have all the riches of our heart concentrated. How can we be bereaved since our Father lives? How can we be robbed since our treasure is on high?

It is daylight and the sun is shining bright and I have a candle lit, but someone blows it out. Shall I sit down and weep because my candle is extinguished? No, not while the sun shines! If God is my portion, if I lose some little earthly comfort I will not complain, for *heavenly* comfort remains. One of our kings, high and haughty in temper, had a quarrel with the citizens of London and thought to alarm them by a dreadful threat that would cow the spirits of the bold citizens—if they did not mind what they were doing he would remove his Court from Westminster. Whereupon, the Lord Mayor begged to enquire whether His Majesty meant to take the Thames away, for so long as the river remained His Majesty might take himself wherever he pleased!

Even so, the world warns us, “you cannot hold out, you cannot rejoice—this trouble shall come and that adversity shall befall.” We reply, so long as you cannot take our Lord away we will not complain. “Philosophers,” said the wise man, “can dance without music.” And true Believers in God can rejoice when outward comforts fail them. He who drinks from the bottle as did the son of the bondwoman may have to complain of thirst. But he who dwells at the well as did Isaac, the child according to promise, he shall never know lack! God grant us Grace, then, to rejoice in our deepest distress because the Lord is our sure possession, our perpetual heritage of joy.

We have now advanced to some degree of hope but there are other steps to ascend. The Prophet then reminds us of another channel of comfort, namely, that God is forevermore good to all who seek Him. “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.” Let Him smite ever so hard, yet if we can maintain the heavenly posture of prayer we may rest assured that He will turn from blows to kisses! When a beggar wants an alms and is very needy, if he sees another beggar at the door of some great man, he will watch while he knocks and when the door is opened and the man is liberally entertained and generously helped, he who has been looking on knocks with boldness in his turn.

My Soul, are you very sad and very low this morning? The Lord is good to them that seek Him! Thousands have come from His door but none have had reason to complain of a cold reception, for in every case He has filled the hungry with good things. Therefore, my Soul, go boldly and knock, for He gives liberally and upbraids not! In all states of dilemma or of difficulty *prayer* is an available source. Bunyan tells us that when the City of Mansoul was besieged it was the depth of winter and the roads were very bad, but even then *prayer* could travel them.

And I will venture to affirm that if all earthly roads were so bad that they could not be traveled, and if Mansoul were so surrounded that there was not a gap left through which we could break our way to get to the king, yet the road *upwards* would always be open! No enemy can barricade that! No blockading ships can sail between our souls and the haven

of the Mercy Seat. The ship of prayer may sail through all temptations, doubts and fears, straight up to the Throne of God. And though she may be outward bound with only griefs and groans and sighs, she shall return freighted with a wealth of blessings! There is hope then, Christian, for you are *allowed to pray*—

***“The Mercy Seat is open still,
Here let our souls retreat.”***

We are getting into deeper water of joy! Let us take another step and this time we shall win greater consolation still, from the fact that it is *good* to be afflicted! “It is good that a man should bear the yoke in his youth.” A little child needs to be coaxed to take its medicine. It may be very ill and Mother may assure it that this medicine will work its cure. But the child says, “No, it is so bitter, I cannot take it.” But *men* need not thus to be persuaded. The bitter is nothing to them. They think of the health which it will bring and so they take the draught and do not even wince.

Now we—if we are little children and have not called to remembrance the fruit which affliction bears—may cry and murmur. But if we are men in Christ Jesus and have learned that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” we shall take the cup right cheerfully and willingly and bless God for it! Why should I dread to descend the shaft of affliction if it leads me to the gold mine of spiritual experience? Why should I cry out if the sun of my prosperity goes down, if in the darkness of my adversity I shall be the better able to count the starry promises with which my faithful God has been pleased to gem the sky?

Go Sun, for in your absence we shall see ten thousand suns! And when your blinding light is gone, we shall see worlds in the dark which were hidden from us by your light. Many a promise is written in sympathetic ink which you cannot read till the fire of trouble brings out the letters. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn Your statutes.” Beloved, Israel went into Egypt poor—but they came out of Egypt with jewels of silver and jewels of gold. They had worked, it is true, at the brick kilns and suffered bitter bondage, but they were bettered by it. They came out enriched by all their tribulations.

A child had a little garden in which it planted many flowers, but they never grew. She put them in, as she thought, tenderly and carefully, but they would not live. She sowed seeds and they sprang up, but very soon they withered away. So she ran to her father’s gardener and when he came to look at it, he said, “I will make it a nice garden for you, that you may grow whatever you want.” He fetched a pick and when the little child saw the terrible pick, she was afraid for her little garden. The gardener struck his tool into the ground and began to make the earth heave and shake, for his pickaxe had caught the edge of a huge stone which lay under almost all the little plot of ground.

All the little flowers were turned out of their places and the garden spoiled for a season so that the little maid wept much. He told her he would make it a fair garden yet and so he did—for having removed that stone which had prevented all the plants from striking root—he soon filled

the ground with flowers which lived and flourished. And so the Lord has come and has turned up all the soil of your present comfort—to get rid of some big stone that was at the bottom of all your spiritual prosperity and would not let your soul flourish! Do not weep with the child, but be comforted by the blessed results and thank your Father's tender hand.

One step more and surely we shall then have good ground to rejoice. The chapter reminds us that these troubles do not last forever. When they have produced their proper result they will be removed, for “the Lord will not cast off forever.” Who told you that the night would never end in day? Who told you that the sea would ebb out till there should be nothing left but a vast track of mud and sand? Who told you that the winter would proceed from frost to frost, from snow and ice and hail, to deeper snow, and yet more heavy tempest? Who told you this, I say? Do you not know that day follows night? That flood comes after ebb? That spring and summer succeed winter?

Then have hope! Hope forever! God fails you not! Do you not know that your God loves you in the midst of all this? Mountains, when hidden in darkness are as real as in daylight and God's love is as true to you now as it was in your brightest moments. No father chastens always—he hates the rod as much as you do! He only cares to use it for that reason which should make you willing to receive it, namely, that it works your lasting good. You shall yet climb Jacob's ladder with the angels and behold Him who sits at the top of it—your Covenant God.

You shall yet, amidst the splendors of eternity, forget the trials of time—or only remember them to bless the God who led you through them and worked your lasting good by them! Come, sing on your bed! Rejoice amidst the flames! Make the wilderness blossom like the rose! Cause the desert to ring with your exalting joys! These light afflictions will soon be over and then, “forever with the Lord,” your bliss shall never wane!

Thus, dear Friends, Memory may be as Coleridge calls it, “the bosom spring of joy,” and when the Holy Spirit bends it to His service, it may be chief among earthly comforters.

II. For a short time, we will speak TO THE DOUBTING CHRISTIAN WHO HAS LOST HIS EVIDENCES OF SALVATION. It is our habit, in our ministry, to avoid extremes as much as possible and to keep to the narrow path of the Truth of God. We believe in the doctrine of predestination. We believe in the doctrine of free agency and we follow the narrow path between those mountains. So in all other Truths. We know some who think that doubts are not sins—we regret their thinking that.

We know others who believe doubts to be impossible where there is any faith—we cannot agree with them. We have heard of persons ridiculing that very sweet and admirable hymn, beginning—

“’Tis a point I long to know.”

We dare not ridicule it ourselves, for we have often had to sing it—we wish it were not so—but we are compelled to confess that doubts have vexed us. The true position, with regard to the doubts and fears of Believers, is just this—that they are sinful and are not to be cultivated, but to be

avoided—but that, more or less, most of Christians do suffer them and that they are *not proof* of a man's being destitute of faith. The very best of Christians have been subject to them. To you who are laboring under anxious thought I now address myself.

Let me bid you to remember, in the first place, matters of the past. Shall I pause and let your heart talk to you? Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first met with you? Perhaps you do not. Well, do you remember happy seasons when He has brought you to the banqueting house? Cannot you remember gracious deliverances? "I was brought low and He helped me." "You have been my help." When you were in those past circumstances, you thought yourselves in overwhelming trouble. You have passed through them and cannot you find comfort in them?

At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy that when the frail boats of the Portuguese went sailing south, they named it the Cape of Storms. But after that cape had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many Cape of Storms, but you have weathered them all and now, let them be a Cape of Good Hope to you. Remember, "You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice."

Say with David, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul, why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Do I not remember this day some hills Mizar where my soul has had such sweet fellowship with God that she thought herself in Heaven? Can I not remember moments of awful agony of soul when in an instant my spirit leaped to the topmost heights of ecstasy at the mention of my Savior's name? Have there not been times with me at the Lord's Table, in private prayer and in listening to His Word, when I could say—

***"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away,
To everlasting bliss?"***

Well, let me remember this and have hope, for—

***"Did Jesus once upon me shine,
Then Jesus is forever mine."***

He never loved where He afterwards hates. His will never changes. It is not possible that He who said, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands," should ever forget or cast away those who once were dear to Him.

Possibly, however, that may not be the means of comfort to some of you. Recall, I pray, the fact that others have found the Lord true to them. They cried to God and He delivered them. Do you not remember your mother? She is now in Heaven and you, her son, are toiling and struggling onward here below. Do not you recollect what she told you before she died? She said God had been faithful and true to her. She was left a widow. And you were but a child then. And she told you how God provided for her and for you and the rest of that little needy family in answer

to her pleadings. Do you believe your mother's testimony and will you not rest with your mother's faith upon your mother's God?

There are grey heads here who would, if it were the proper season, testify to you that in an experience of fifty and sixty years in which they have walked before the Lord in the land of the living, they cannot put their finger upon any date and say, "Here God was unfaithful." Or, "Here He left me in the time of trouble." I, who am but young have passed through many and sore tribulations after my sort and can say and must say it, for if I speak not, the timbers of this house might cry out against my ungrateful silence—He is a faithful God and He remembers His servants and leaves them not in the hour of their trouble! Hearing our testimonies, cannot you say in the words of the text, "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope"?

Remember, again, and perhaps this may be consolatory to you, that though you think you are not a child of God at all now, yet if you look within you will see some faint traces of the holy Spirit's hand. The complete picture of Christ is not there, but cannot you see the crayon sketch—the outline—the charcoal marks? "What," you say, "do you mean?" Do you *want* to be a Christian? Have you not *desires* after God? Cannot you say with the Psalmist, "My heart and my flesh pants after God—after the living God"?

Oh, I have often had to console myself with this! When I could not see a single Christian Grace beaming in my spirit, I have had to say, "I know I shall never be satisfied until I get to be like my Lord." One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see—see enough, at least, to know my own defects and emptiness and misery. And I have just enough spiritual life to feel that I want more and that I cannot be satisfied unless I have more. Well, now, where God the Holy Spirit has done as much as *that*, He will do more! Where He begins a good work, we are told, He will carry it on and perfect it in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Call that to mind, Brothers and Sisters, and you may have hope.

But I would remind you that there is a promise in this Book that exactly describes and suits your case. A young man had been left by his father heir of all his property, but an adversary disputed his right. The case was to come on in the court and this young man, while he felt sure that he had a legal right to the whole, could not prove it. His legal adviser told him that there was more evidence wanted than he could bring. How to get this evidence he did not know. He went to an old chest where his father had kept his papers, turned all out and as he turned the writings over and over and over, there was an old parchment. He undid the red tape with great anxiety and there it was—the very thing he wanted—his father's will in which the estate was spoken of as being left entirely to himself. He went into court boldly enough with that!

Now, when we get into doubts, it is a good thing to turn to this old Book and read until at last we can say, "That is it—that promise was made for me." Perhaps it may be this one—"When the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord

will hear them. I the God of Jacob will not forsake them.” Or this one—“Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” May I beg you to rummage the old Book through? And you, poor doubting, despairing Christian, will soon stumble on some precious parchment, as it were, which God the Holy Spirit will make to you the title-deed of immortality and life!

If these recollections should not suffice, I have one more. You look at me and you open your ears to find what new thing I am going to tell you. No, I am going to tell you nothing new, but yet it is the best thing that was ever said out of Heaven, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” You have heard that a thousand times—and is the best music you have ever heard! If I am not a saint, I am a sinner. And if I may not go to the Throne of Grace as a *child*, I will go as a *sinner*!

A certain king was accustomed on set occasions to entertain all the beggars of the city. Around him sat his courtiers, all clothed in rich apparel. The beggars sat at the same table in their rags of poverty. Now it came to pass, that on a certain day, one of the courtiers had spoiled his silken apparel so that he dared not put it on, and he felt, “I cannot go to the king’s feast today, for my robe is foul.” He sat weeping till the thought struck him, “Tomorrow, when the king holds his feast, some will come as courtiers happily decked in their beautiful array and others will come and be made quite as welcome who will be dressed in rags. Well, well,” he said, “so long as I may see the king’s face, and sit at the king’s table, I will enter with the beggars.” So, without mourning because he had lost his silken habit, he put on the rags of a beggar and he saw the king’s face as well as if he had worn his scarlet and fine linen! My soul has done this full many a time and I bid you do the same! If you cannot come as a saint, come as a sinner! Only *come* and you shall receive joy and peace.

There was a lamentable accident which occurred in the North in one of the coal pits. A considerable number of miners were down below when the top of the pit fell in and the shaft was completely blocked up. Those who were down below sat together in the dark and sang and prayed. They gathered to a spot where the last remains of air below could be breathed. There they sat and sang after the lights had gone out because the air would not support the flame. They were in total darkness, but one of them said he had heard that there was a connection between that pit and an old pit that had been worked years ago.

He said it was a low passage, through which a man might get by crawling all the way, lying flat upon the ground—the passage was very long, but they crept through it and at last they came out to light at the bottom of the other pit and their lives were saved. If my present way to Christ as a saint gets blocked up. If I cannot go straight up the shaft and see the Light of my father up yonder—there is an old working, the old fashioned way by which *sinner*s go, by which poor thieves go, by which harlots go—come, I will crawl along lowly and humbly, flat upon the ground—I will crawl along till I see my Father and cry, “Father, I am not worthy to be called Your son. Make me as one of Your hired servants, so long as I may but dwell in Your house.”

In your very worst case you can still come as *sinner*s. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—call this to mind and you may have hope.

III. I must have a few words with SEEKERS. Always in this congregation we have some who are seeking the Lord—would to God we had many more! It were glorious preaching if all were either seeking or had found. If it were not for the mixed multitude who neither seek nor find, our work were easy work, indeed. Some of you are seeking God today and you are very much troubled with the fear that you cannot be saved. I will have a few words with you to recall to mind some common-place Truths of God which may give you hope.

First of all some of you are troubled about the doctrine of election. I cannot, this morning, explain it to you. I believe it and receive it with joy! And you may rest assured, however much it troubles you, it is true. Though you may not like it, it is true! And remember it is not a matter of opinion as to what you *like* or do *not* like—as to what you *think* or do *not* think—you must turn to the Bible and if you find it there you must believe it.

Listen to me. You have got an idea that some persons will be sent to Hell, merely and only because it is the will of God that they should be sent there. Throw the idea overboard because it is a very wicked one and is not to be found in Scripture! There could not be a Hell inside the man's conscience who knew that he was wretched merely because God willed he should be—for the very essence of Hell is *sin* and a sense of having willfully committed it. There could not be the flames of Hell if there were not this conviction on the mind of the person suffering it, "I knew my duty but I did it not—I willfully sinned against God and I am here not because of anything He did or did not do, but because of my own sin."

If you drive that dark thought away you may be on the road to comfort. Remember again, that whatever the doctrine of election may be or may not be, there is a free invitation in the Gospel given to needy sinners, "Whoever *will*, let him take of the water of life freely." Now you may say, "I cannot reconcile the two." There are a great many other things that you cannot do. God knows where these two things meet though you do not. And I hope you do not intend to wait till you are a philosopher before you will be saved—because it is likely enough that while you are trying to be wise by persistently remaining a practical fool you will find yourself in Hell where your wisdom will not avail you.

God commands you to trust Christ and promises that all Believers shall be saved. Leave your difficulties till you have trusted Christ and *then* you will be in a capacity to understand them better than you do now. In order to understand Gospel doctrine you must believe in Christ first. What does Christ say, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." Now election is the *Father's* work. The *Father* chooses sinners. Christ makes the Atonement. You must go, then, to Christ the atoning Sacrifice before you can understand the Father as the electing God. Do not persist in going to the Father first. Go to the Son as He tells you.

Once more, remember that even if your own idea of the doctrine of election were the truth, yet if it were so, you can but perish should you seek the Lord—

***“I can but perish if I go, I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away I know I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died.”***

Trust Christ even if you should perish and you shall never perish if you trust in Him! Well, if that difficulty were removed, I can suppose another, saying, “Ah, but my case is of great sin.” Recall this to mind and you will have hope, namely, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,” Paul says, “I am chief.” “I am chief.” Paul was the chief of sinners and he went through the door of Mercy. And now there can be none greater than the chief, and where the chief went through you can go through! If the chief of sinners has been saved, why not you? Why not you?

We heard Mr. Offord say the other day that he knew a good woman who, when the Salt-Ash Bridge was made down at Plymouth, would not go on it. She said she did not believe it was safe. She saw locomotive engines and trains go over it so that the bridge sustained hundreds of tons at a time, but she shook her head and said she wondered people were so immensely presumptuous as to cross it.

When the bridge was totally clear and not an engine on it she was asked if she would not walk on it then. Well, she did venture a little way, but she trembled all the while for fear her weight should make it fall. It could bear hundreds of tons of steel but it could not bear her! You great Sinner, it is much the same case with you. The stupendous bridge which Christ has flung across the wrath of God will bear the weight of your sin, for it has borne ten thousands of thousands across before and will bear millions of sinners yet to the shore of their eternal rest. Call that to remembrance and you may have hope.

“Yes,” says one, “but I believe I have committed the unpardonable sin.” My dear Brother, I believe you have *not*, but I want you to call one thing to remembrance and that is that the unpardonable sin is a sin which is unto death. Now a sin which is unto death means a sin which brings death on the conscience. The man who commits it never has any conscience afterwards—he is dead there. Now, you have some feeling. You have enough life to wish to be saved from sin. You have enough life to long to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! You have *not* committed the unpardonable sin, therefore have hope.

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “But,” you reply, “Oh, I cannot repent! My heart is so hard.” Call to remembrance that Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins and you may *come* to Him to *get* repentance and need not *bring* it to Him! Come without any repentance and ask Him to give it to you and He

will give it. Rest assured there is no fear whatever that if the soul seeks softness and tenderness it has that softness and tenderness in a measure even now, and will have it to the fullest extent before long. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have a general unfitness and incapacity for being saved.” Then, dear Friend, I want you to call this to remembrance, that Jesus Christ has a general fitness and a general capacity for *saving* sinners.

I do not know what you need, but I do know Christ has it. I do not know the full of your disease, but I do know Christ is the physician who can meet it. I do not know how hard and stubborn and stolid and ignorant and blind and dead your nature may be, but I do know that “Christ is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” What you are has nothing to do with the question, except that it is the mischief to be undone. The true answer to the question of how you are to be saved lies yonder in the bleeding body of the immaculate Lamb of God! Christ has all salvation in Himself. He is Alpha, He is Omega. He does not begin to save and leave you to perish, nor does He offer to complete what you must first begin.

He is the foundation as well as the pinnacle. He commences with you as the green blade and He will finish with you as the full corn in the ear. O that I had a voice like the trumpet of God that shall wake the dead at last! If I might only have it to utter one sentence, it would be this one, “Your help is found in Christ.” As for you, there never can be found anything hopeful in your human nature. It is death itself! It is rottenness and corruption. Turn, turn your eyes away from this despairing mass of black depravity and look to Christ! He is the sacrifice for human guilt. His is the righteousness that covers men and makes them acceptable before the Lord!

Look to Him as you are—black, foul, guilty, leprous, condemned. Go as you are! Trust Jesus Christ to save you and remembering this, you shall have “a hope that makes not ashamed,” which shall endure forever. I have labored to speak comfortable words and words in season and I have tried to speak them in homely language, too. But, O Comforter, what can we do without You? YOU must cheer our sadness. To comfort souls is God’s own work! Let us conclude, then, with the words of the Savior’s promise, “If I go away, I will send you another Comforter, who shall abide with you forever.” And let our prayer be that He would abide with us to His own Glory and to our comfort forevermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Lamentations 3:1-33.*

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THE NOVELTIES OF DIVINE MERCY

NO. 3170

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“His compassions...are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.”
Lamentations 3:22, 23.

THE Book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah is very dolorous. When you look upon the dragons, owls, pelicans and bitterns of the wilderness, you have a fit picture of his mournful state. He was full of grief, like a bottle needing vent. His heart was ready to burst with wormwood and with gall.

But the whole current changes when the Prophet brings to his remembrance the mercy of God! No sooner does he think of the compassions of the Most High than at once he takes his harp from the willows and begins to sing as joyously as ever that sweet singer of Israel, David, sang before him. And, truly, if we, too, instead of harping upon our miseries, would but reflect upon our mercies, we would exchange our mournful dirges for songs of joy!

It is true that God's people are a tried people, but it is equally true that God's Grace is equal to their trials! It is quite true that through much tribulation they enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but then they *do* enter—and the thought of the Kingdom that is coming sustains them in their present tribulation! They wade through the waters of woe, often breast-deep, but the billows do not, *and shall not*, go over them! They shall still be able to sing even in the midst of the tempest. I would suggest to any here who are in the habit of complaining—and I would remind you that it is a very bad habit—and to any of you who have become chronic murmurers, that this temper of mind is exceedingly sinful. While, on the other hand, the remembrance of God's mercy and grateful talk about it is a virtuous habit—one which is honoring to God as well as strengthening and profitable to our own souls. Imitate Jeremiah, then, and if you can find no comfort in your present outward circumstances, meditate upon the unfailing mercies of God!

What a blessed word that is which the Prophet here uses, “compassions”! David uses the word, “pity,” more frequently, but he means the same thing. It is a humbling word, though exceedingly consolatory. I have often felt very deeply chastened in my own soul at the remembrance of the text, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them

that fear Him.” What? Is this the Lord’s attitude towards even the strongest and the best of saints? Does God only *pity* them? Yes, it is even so—those that do exploits, those that lead the van in the day of battle, those to whom we look up with respect and admiration, God looks upon with Infinite Love—but that love still takes the form of *pity*. He can see their weakness where we only see their strength. He can discover their defects where we merely admire the work of the Holy Spirit in them. And, therefore, He regards them with pity. Yet it is a Father’s pity, the pity of a Father who smiles at the weakness of the child, knowing that the attempt which it is making, though a feeble one, will educate it for something better! And foreseeing that it will, by-and-by, outgrow its weakness and be able to do greater things.

God has compassion for the best of His people, but it is compassion prompted by love. It is not the pity that is akin to scorn, but the pity which melts from love, as the honey drops from the honeycomb. I would again ask our dear friends who are tried and troubled to think of the Infinite Pity of God towards them. He has smitten you, but still, not as hard as He might have done! Out of pity He has stayed His hand. He has spoken sharply to you through your own conscience, but if He had spoken as loudly as your sins deserved, there would have been loud thunder-claps instead of gentle admonitions! He has withered your gourds, but if He had done to you what stern justice might have demanded, it would not have been the gourd that would have withered, but you, yourself, would have wasted away!

Admire the compassion of God toward you! Even if one child in your family is sick, they are not all sick. If the Lord has taken away one of your friends by death, there are many other friends still left to cheer and comfort you. You have had heavy losses in business, but you are not bankrupt. You are not in good health, but still, you have not been stricken with the diseases which have attacked some others—your pain is bearable. It is true that the weather is dull and heavy to your spirit, but it is not the blackness of “the valley of the shadow of death.” Take heart even in the midst of affliction and chastisement, for the compassion of God is still to be seen!

Moved by such thoughts as these, the Prophet penned the remarkable words before us, “His compassions are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.” I have been admiring the first sentence of the text which suggests to me *the novelties of Divine Mercy*. And as I speak upon it, I mean to get you to preach to yourselves, to wake up your recollections, to ask you to turn over a few pages in your old notebooks, to make you look at your diaries and remember what God has done for you since you first savingly knew His name.

I. First, then, I want to remind you that GOD'S MERCIES ARE ALWAYS NOVELTIES—"They are new every morning."

The water that is in the cistern may be sufficient for a long time, but if it is stored, it will not remain fresh. It may have been fresh the first morning it flowed into the cistern, but it will not be fresh tomorrow. And the longer it lasts, the more stagnant it will become. But the water that gushes from the springhead is always fresh! I drank of it when I was a boy. I went to it in the prime of manhood. I stoop to drink of it now that my hair is turning gray and it is still as fresh and sparkling as ever. God is not the cistern, but the Fountain! Our treasures which we lay up on earth are the stagnant pools, but the treasure which God gives us from Heaven, in Providence and in Grace, is the crystal Fountain which wells up from the eternal deeps and is always fresh and always new! There are no gray hairs upon the Angel of the Covenant, no wrinkles upon His brow. I may say of Him what the spouse in Solomon's Song says of her Beloved, "His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." Mercy is as old as eternity and is always God's darling attribute, yet it is always young, active and bright and fair! Mercy is not a tree that yields its fruit but once in the year—our trees bear such fruit as that which may be stored through the winter and kept till, perhaps, it becomes rotten. But the mercy of God is like the Tree of Life which bears its fruit every month—at all times and at all seasons we may have a share of the compassions of God—and we shall find that "they are new every morning."

The thought that God's mercy is always new is a pleasing one, but that it is new every morning is very amazing. If you had to preach year after year, as some of us do, you would find it no small difficulty to have something new to say every Sunday. But God has something new for us every morning! I suppose the writers in our newspapers often have to exercise their brains to give us something new every day, but God, with the greatest ease, sends to the many millions of His people something new every morning! He does not need to repeat Himself. If He sends the same mercy, there is something about it which shows it to be fresh and new. God never gives us old money that has been worn and defaced—His mercy always comes to us fresh from the mint with all the brightness and clearness of new coinage! "His compassions are new every morning." Not only *some* mornings, but EVERY morning from the first of January to the last of December! God never has to stay His hand, He never has to pause to think of something fresh. His mercies come to us freely, spontaneously, "new every morning." Let us think for a little while what this means.

In the first place, every morning brings a new mercy because *every morning ends the night*. The night is the time of danger and dismay. Why do we ask, concerning the sick one, "How did he pass the night?" We seldom enquire, "How did he pass the day?" Is it not because somehow or

other we connect the night with the idea of insecurity and danger? We wear the image of death upon our faces while we sleep—and how slight the difference is between a sleeping man and a dead man is plain to all beholders. Every morning we may say, “What a mercy that our bed did not become our tomb! What a mercy that in the night we were not alarmed with fire, that our couch was not consumed and ourselves in it—that the house was not broken into by wicked men, that no convulsions of Nature terrified us, that no cry of anguish, like the shrieks that woke up every parent in Egypt, was heard in our house because our child was dying!” Such cries have been heard by some of us and we have had dreadful nights which we shall never forget! Let us live as long as we may, but every morning in which we wake without such alarms and tears, or after a quiet, restful night in which God has given to His beloved, sleep, we have had a new mercy and we may at once look up to the Lord, and say, “We praise You that another night is gone! Your mercies are new every morning.”

But every morning also brings a new mercy because *every morning ushers in another day*. That is a new reason for praise, for we have no right to an hour, or even a minute, much less to a day. To the sinner, especially, it is a great mercy to have another day of Grace, another opportunity for repentance, a new reprieve from death, a little more space in which to escape from Hell and fly to Heaven. Ah, Soul, suppose you had never seen the light of another rising sun but had heard, instead thereof, the dreadful sentence, “Depart, accursed one, into the darkness which shall never be pierced by a ray of light”? How terrible would have been your portion! So what a mercy it is that you are still spared!

The Christian may thank God that he has another day in which he may walk with God as Enoch did, another day in which he may trust God as Abraham did, another day in which he may work for Christ as Paul did, another day in which he may reap the Gospel harvest, another day in which he may gather pearls for Immanuel’s crown, another day in which he may be ripening for Glory, another day in which he may hold communion with his Lord, another day in which he may be making advances in the blessed pilgrimage towards the Celestial City! God gives us our days—may He teach us their value, for they are pearls of great price. And then as each new morning breaks, we may truly say to Him, “Your mercies are new every morning, for the morning has brought us another day.”

Further, a new mercy comes to us each morning, at least to the most of us, because *each morning brings supplies for the day*. I have often thought to myself, “What a mercy it is to know that when I wake there is a breakfast provided for me!” There are many, alas, who do not know from where their first meal in the day is to come. That is a sorrowful

thing, and a very trying discipline—but it is certainly not the case with the most of us, for we always have enough for the next day in our cupboard. When we rise in the morning, we are not quite like the sparrows who have to seek their food. They begin to chirp as soon as they wake—there is nothing in their barn, yet they sing, as Luther understood then—

**“Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,
God provides for the morrow.”**

Then they set to work to find their daily bread and find it they do, for God feeds the fowls of Heaven—and your day’s provision is waiting for you! There is the manna for you outside the camp and you know where to gather it. As you do so, remember the mercy of the Lord and bless His holy name!

But you say that you have not all you could wish to have and, therefore, you are not happy. Ah, dear Friends, let us all obey the Apostle’s injunction, “Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.” And let us all learn the lesson of which the Apostle wrote, “I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

Let me again remind you—because I am afraid some of you, especially those of you who have abundance, do not always remember it—that you are daily dependent upon God’s Providence, that you as much receive your daily bread from God as if the ravens brought it, that you as certainly obtain all that you receive from the hand of God as if it dropped from the clouds, or as if the wind brought you quails! Be thankful, then, that as each day brings to your household fresh needs for daily bread, clothing and shelter, God is also pleased to give such mercies as you need every morning.

In spiritual things, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, how richly may the text be illustrated! “His compassions are new every morning,” because *every morning I commit fresh sins*. Strange creature that I am, I can scarcely open my eyes to the light before my complex nature begins to display the darkness that still lingers within me! Miserable mass of humanity that I am by nature, I can hardly breathe without offending in the thoughts and imaginations of my heart. And even though I may watch my eyes, guard my tongue and keep the members of my body pure, yet still my heart goes a-wandering and my tongue, before long, speaks idle words! Yet the mercy is that with the new sin, there always comes the new pardon, for “His compassions are new every morning.” So, before we leave our bedchamber, we go afresh to the—

**“Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins”—**

and once again we wash and are clean! When we go forth to our business and tug and toil to earn an honest living, we are all too prone to wander from our God—yet even then we may still think of our blessed Master who girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin and washed His disciples' feet—and then said that they were clean every whit. We are like those disciples, for our daily pollutions need a daily cleansing. We have been once washed in the precious blood of Jesus and we are clean in the sight of God, but we need to be daily cleansed from our daily defilements—and every morning brings us this Divine Grace.

Then, we scarcely leave our bedchamber, no, we do not leave it, before *the new morning brings new temptations*. Some mornings especially bring us temptations that we have never experienced before, insinuations gain an entrance into our mind which never perplexed us till that moment. We scarcely know how to deal with them—and young Christians, especially, are often staggered when these diabolical shafts are winging their way towards them! Then, when we go downstairs to begin the duties of the day, we do not know how long we shall be before we shall be sorely tempted to sin. If we did but know at what hour the tempter would come, we might be on the watch for him, but lo, Satan and sin come like a thief in the night! The time when a child of God is most likely to be tempted to sin is when he is in the holiest frame of mind. You may think that is an odd remark, but I make it as the result of my own experience. I have often found that when I have been nearest to God in prayer, or when I have most enjoyed a service, I have just then been met by somebody who said something gross, or wicked, or unkind. And I have been tempted to answer and perhaps *have* answered in a way for which I have afterwards been sorry. If you are like I, Beloved, you know that after having been lifted up by some ecstatic experience, you are not well prepared to meet these contrary individuals—so that in your moments of highest joy, something may occur to cause your feet to trip!

Well, now, it is such a mercy for me to remember that when I begin each new morning, though I cannot tell what temptations may come to me, I do know that God's mercies are new every morning and, therefore, that there will be fresh Grace to enable me to resist the fresh temptations! We may rest assured that we shall be taken with no temptation but such as is common to man—and that God will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape for us. Put on the whole Gospel armor and then let the shafts of the tempter fall where they may—they shall not wound you. Or if a wound is received by you between the joints of your harnesses, there is a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations—and a heavenly hand shall reach down with those healing leaves that your wounds may be healed. Let us be glad, then, that there is daily Grace to enable us to overcome daily temptations!

We do not completely know, when we wake in the morning, what will be the particular tasks of the day, for *each new day brings new duties*. Even though we should know completely, as we do know in part, the service appointed for the day, yet it would be a sad thing to wake up to new duties and new responsibilities if we had not also, new strength with which to discharge them. Every day brings a new duty, or it may be an old duty in a new shape, cast in another mold. All that I did yesterday cannot exonerate me if I am idle today—and all the service that I did for my Master a year ago will not excuse me if I waste this year. I must take each hour of time on the wing and I must seek to get wealth from it as it passes by me. This is your consolation, Beloved, that there shall be daily strength given to you for the daily duty to which God calls you! Depend upon it, if God will allow us to work or fight for Him, He will not let us go in our own strength or at our own charges, but He will provide His soldiers with suitable weapons—and He will provide the workers in His vineyard with the best tools for their service. There is daily Grace, then, for daily duties.

I might go on to mention that *each day will bring its trials, anxieties and necessities*, but I should also have to remind you that each morning brings the promise, “As your *days*”—note that the word is in the plural, not, as so many misquote it, “As your day,” but, “As your *days*, so shall your strength be.” As long as days shall last and till time shall be swallowed up in eternity, God’s compassions shall be new every morning—to meet our new needs, our new relations, our new responsibilities, our new temptations and our new sins!

II. Now, I will try to illustrate this subject in another light, for this text is like a kaleidoscope—you may turn it as many times as you will and there will constantly be a fresh form of beauty to be seen. Remember, therefore, that **SOMETIMES THE MERCIES WE RECEIVE ARE ACTUALLY NEW IN THEMSELVES.**

You must all have had certain periods in your lives when new mercies were bestowed upon you. I cannot mention them all, but just think of the Ebenezers, the stones of help, all along your pathway—and the stones of Bethel that you have set up after some distinguishing favors which have made such days and nights memorable to you. Such mercies as these have been new in a peculiarly special sense.

Sometimes the mercy is *new in substance*—you have received what you never received before. At other times the mercy is not so much new in substance as it is *new in the way of its coming*. I am sure that yesterday, when after praying for the last two or three months that God would remember the various works we have in hand—and we received a thousand pounds for the Stockwell Orphanage from some unknown donor—I felt that it was a new mercy of a very special character! Money has been

sent to me, many times, for the Lord's work under my charge, but it has each time been sent in a different way, or in a different form—and each time it has well-near overwhelmed me! When I heard of the generous gift yesterday, I was sitting with a dear Brother who had just been saying to me, "My dear Friend, there are some people who say, 'Our Brother Spurgeon does not know where to stop—he is always going on from one good thing to another—if he should make a failure, it would be a very dreadful thing!' Now," said my Friend, "don't you think it would be a great catastrophe? What a large amount is required for the College!" And then he mentioned other things and closed by saying, "Suppose there should be a failure in the income?" I said, "I never suppose any such thing! I have no purpose to see and no end to gain, and no motive in carrying on all these institutions, but God's Glory. I was forced into these works against my will and God cannot leave me—He must carry on the work and I am persuaded that He will do so—my motive is Jehovah Jireh." Just at that moment, the post came and the letter was opened which told me about the thousand pounds. My Friend said, "My dear Brother, let us kneel down and praise the Lord for His mercy." And so we did. And with many tears he thanked God, oh, in such a warm-hearted manner—and he evidently felt how foolish it was to talk about things failing that are undertaken for God, because God is sure to help us! My Friend said it was a blessed means of Divine Grace to him and that he would remember that day as one of the choice days in his life in which God had showed that He would help those who, in His name, undertake work for the poor and needy and try to aid His cause. Well now, was not that a new mercy? It was not a new thing for us to receive help, but the mercy came in a new way—and it is in such a fashion as this that God's mercies "are new every morning."

Then sometimes, when you do not get the mercy in exactly a new way, yet *it seems new to you because you are in a new condition*. You have more knowledge and can better comprehend the value of the mercy. You have more experience and can better understand your own need of the mercy. The mercy which comes to a young man of 20 has a special brightness about it—the mercy which comes to the same man at 70 may not have so much sparkle about it, but there will be, I think, if the man is a full-grown Christian—and age is not always identical with growth in Grace—a deeper and more solemn sense of obligation when the mercy comes to him. As we advance in life, the glitter of our thoughts may depart, but the solid gold of them will remain and increase and multiply—that is to say if we really grow mature in spirit as well as old in years. The Lord grant that we may! I am sure that the light in which the aged Christian man regards a mercy is, in some respects, a different light from that in which the young man regards it. The babe in Grace is very grate-

ful for God's mercy and sees that the mercy is very precious. But the full-grown man in Christ Jesus has a gratitude of a far richer and deeper kind. Thus, this mercy of God is new to us because we see it in a new light and it finds us in a new state.

III. Now, thirdly, to come to the practical point of my discourse, I want to ask this question—As GOD'S MERCIES ARE NEW EVERY MORNING, WHAT THEN?

Then I call upon you for *new praise*. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ whose new mercies you and I, my Brothers and Sisters, are always receiving, that our hearts and our lips should praise Him hour by hour, and even moment by moment! Weave new crowns for Christ! Sing new sonnets in honor of His blessed Person and of the mercies which so constantly flow to us from Him—

***“Your mercy, my God, is the theme of my song,
The joy of my heart, and the boast of my tongue!
Your free Grace alone, from the first to the last
Has won my affections and bound my soul fast.
Great Father of mercies! Your goodness I own,
And the Covenant love of Your crucified Son!
All praise to the Spirit, whose whisper Divine
Seals mercy, pardon and righteousness mine!”***

I ask you not merely for praise in words, but for *praise in new actions* which shall speak far more loudly than words. Be not content with what you have already done for God, but out of gratitude to Him be constantly doing something new if it is possible. As the soldier seeks to be always pressing forward, so let us be always trying to do more and more for God. Let us be even as the eagle when he soars to the skies, continually circling higher and higher. God grant that we may not rest on our laurels, saying, “We did such-and-such when we were young,” or, “We gave so much yesterday to the cause of God,” but, as the new mercies continue to come to us, let there constantly be on our part new returns of service for God.

And I ask not only for new actions, but also for *new faith*. Let every new mercy confirm our confidence in the God of Mercy! All these compassions of our Covenant-keeping God are so many swift witnesses against our unbelief. All these loving kindnesses of the Lord are so many strong evidences for the confirmation of our confidence in Him. God may well say to us, “At what time have I been false to you? Have I received you for a season and then cast you away? Have I been slack in blessing you? Have I stinted you in mercy? Have I withheld My loving kindness from you?” You dare not say that God has been stingy towards you! His mercies have been “new every morning.” Shall God, then, have to say to you, “You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifice: but you have made Me to serve

with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities”? Let not the Lord have to upbraid us thus but let our grateful enquiry be, “What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us?” And so let us give Him new praise, new gratitude and new service to prove our gratitude!

I ask you, then, for new confidence in God. Or if you cannot mount so high as that, at any rate I ask all here who have proved the faithfulness of God to offer to Him *new prayers*. If you have already been heard by Him, pray to Him again. The beggar in the street says to you, “Help me this time and I will never ask you to help me again.” Talk not like that, O you who beg at God’s door of Mercy, but—

**“From His mercy draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more!”**

“Open your mouth wide and I will fill it,” is the Lord’s gracious exhortation and promise! Spread your wings and soar away to the very Throne of God and then *expect* that He will still exceed your faith and do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or even think!

Gathering up much matter into a little space, I ask of all Christians the exercise of a holy ingenuity in inventing *new plans for honoring Christ*. I ask the exercise of a holy perseverance in carrying those plans into action. I ask for the blazing of a holy zeal every morning to make the carrying out of those plans to be always earnest and fervent so that as the Lord’s loving kindnesses are new every morning, so also may be our grateful recollections and our loving service!

IV. I have no time left for speaking at length upon the second sentence of the text, GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS, though I had intended to do so. I shall, therefore, only utter these few remarks upon it.

“Great is Your faithfulness,” so great that *there has never been an exception to it*. You have never, O Lord, at any time acted towards any of Your people otherwise than according to Truth and righteousness! A man may be quite honest and upright, and yet if he conducts an extensive business, it will be very difficult for him to escape a charge of having sometimes overstepped the mark. He may never have done so, but still, it will be very difficult, especially if he has many employees, for him to escape the charge of having done so. But our God has had thousands of millions of people to deal with throughout all ages and yet there stands not beneath the cape of Heaven, nor yet above the stars, nor in Hell itself, a single soul who can say that God, in any transaction, has ever dealt with him otherwise than according to absolute faithfulness!

But, further than that, *no item in the whole roll of Divine promises to us has been unfulfilled by God*. Old Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you.” If a man makes many promises, I will defy him to keep them all, because even if he is both able and willing to keep them,

yet he will not always be able to remember them. But God remembers every promise that He ever made and He takes care to honor each of those promises in the experience of those who believe in Him! They who trust in the Lord shall find Him to be faithful, not only in great things, but also in little things! While He keeps the oath of His Covenant fast forever, His faintest Word shall abide firm and steadfast, and the least Truth which He has ever declared shall never grow dim.

The glory of God's faithfulness is that *no sin of man has ever made Him unfaithful*. Unbelief is a most damning thing and yet, even though we believe not, God abides faithful! His children may rebel against His Law and they may wander far from His statutes. And He may chastise them with many stripes, yet He said, "My loving kindness will I not utterly take away from them, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail." God's saints may fall under the cloud of His displeasure and provoke the Most High by their transgressions—yet He will have compassion upon them, will turn unto them and say—"I, even I, am He that blots out their transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember their sins." So no sin of man can make God unfaithful—

***"Let us, then, with gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord, for He is kind—
For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."***

And, once again, *no crisis that can by any possibility ever arise can compel God to be unfaithful to His people*. Even though the whole world should go to wreck and ruin, yet He would still bear up the pillars of His people's hope. When His saints cannot be safe *under* Heaven, He will take them up *to* Heaven. When He shall bid the great fountains of fire leap up to consume this world and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, if we are alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man, we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air! God provided an ark for Noah before He sent the deluge. And He had a mountain refuge ready for Lot before He destroyed Sodom. If David must be driven from the court of Saul, he shall be sheltered in Engedi. And if, by-and-by, the Philistines shall come up against the land, God will still take care of His servant! At the worst pinch, God will always be there—you may reckon it as certain that He has never forgotten His people! When the clock strikes and the bell tolls the hour, God will arise for their defense and show Himself to be strong on behalf of all those who put their trust in Him!

Settle it in your minds, Beloved, that God cannot lie! Believe every man to be a liar if you must, but never believe that God can fail you! If you speak in your soul after this fashion, "Sometimes I see the wicked prosper and I am in tribulation and distress. And my spirit says, 'Has God forgotten me? Will He give all the good things to those who curse

Him and cause His people to be chastened forever?” Say that to yourself very softly and then add, “Yet, though all things seem thus contrary to the Lord’s people, I know that God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” Say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him...The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Say with old Eli, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” “Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Hold to your faith as the ancient warrior hung to his shield, for therein lies your safety. God help you to cling to him! When you cannot rejoice in the light of His Countenance, trust in the shadow of His wings and even there, like David, you shall find a safe retreat!

Here I leave the subject with you for your private meditations. And I pray God to quicken in every one of His people a life of holy joy and confidence. Oh, that all of you whom I am addressing knew at least *something* of the experiences of God’s people! You who only live the life of sense and have no faith in Jesus, little know what I mean, for though I have talked largely of the sorrows of God’s people, yet the joys of faith are unspeakable! One drop of God’s Love would sweeten a sea of gall. Yes, I was almost about to say that even the pangs of Hell would lose their bitterness if a drop of the Love of Christ could once flow there and be tasted by those who are lost!

Christian, you already know what it is to find roses among the thorns and to prove your pangs and your sufferings to be soul-enriching things—messengers from the King bringing you to His banquet of wine—and leading you to the discovery of the treasures which He has laid up for you. You know this, so tell it to the ungodly and perhaps their mouths will be set to watering after the good things of Christ’s table! When they once long for them, they shall have them, for Christ never refuses a hungry one. And if there is such an one here, a poor, empty, destitute soul, remember, dear Friend, that Mercy’s door stands always open and that Christ, the Host of the Gospel Inn, stands always ready to receive every soul that comes, having written this gracious promise over the door of the Inn, “Him that came to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

—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.**

CHOICE PORTIONS

NO. 451

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 25, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For the Lord’s portion is His people.”
Deuteronomy 32:9.***

***“The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”
Lamentations 3:24.***

The love of God changes us into its own image, so that what the Lord says concerning *us*, we also can declare concerning *Him*. God is love essentially, and when this essential love shines forth freely upon us, we reflect it back upon Him. He is like the sun, the great father of lights, and we are as the moon and the planets—we shine in rays borrowed from His brightness. He is the golden seal, and we, His people, are the wax receiving the impression.

Our Heaven is to be likeness to Christ and our preparation for Heaven consists in a growing imitation of Him in all things. See, Brethren, how the Lord gives the Word, and our heart, like an echo, repeats every syllable. The Lord loves His people and we love Him because He first loved us. He has chosen His saints and they also have made Him their chosen heritage. The saints are precious to Jesus and unto us who believe *He* is precious. Christ lived for us, and for us to live is Christ—we gain all things by His death and for us to die is gain.

The Church is the looking glass in which Christ sees Himself reflected. She is like a fair songstress taking up the refrain of Jesus’ canticles of love, while He sings, “My sister, My spouse,” she answers, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” It is most delightful to perceive how, through Divine Grace, Believers come to have the same feeling towards their God which their gracious Lord has towards them.

Our two texts present us with an interesting instance—the Church is God’s portion—He delights in her, He finds in her His solace and His joy. But God is also, as the result of this, the Church’s portion—her full delight and bliss. Beloved, the love is mutual. And whereas the Lord is married to His people, we perceive that it is no forced match on either side. He voluntarily gave Himself to her and she joyfully surrenders her all to Him. His whole heart He gave unto His chosen people, and now they as voluntarily, though led by Divine Grace, give themselves to Him. And while He clasps His Church in His arms, saying, “You are My portion,” she returns the embrace and rapturously cries, “You are my portion, O Lord.”

As God shall help me, and relying only on His Divine assistance, I shall try to work out these two texts at some length. We shall commence with, “*The Lord’s portion.*” We will then proceed to the second, “*His people’s portion.*”

I. “THE LORD’S PORTION IS HIS PEOPLE.”

1. The text teaches us that *the Church of God is the Lord's own peculiar and special property*. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. The world and they that dwell therein." By creation, as well as by Providence, Jehovah is the liege Lord and Sovereign possessor of the entire universe. Let none venture to dispute His claims, or say that He is not the great Owner of all things, for thus says the Lord, "Behold, all souls are Mine." But He has a special property in His Church.

As a king may have ample possessions, to all of which he has undoubted right, still he has royal mansions and crown lands which are in a very special sense his own. So has the Lord of All a peculiar interest in His saints. As Osborne and Balmoral and Windsor belong to our sovereign by a tenure which differs from her title and claim to the United Kingdom, so the Church is the peculiar heritage of the King of kings. The whole world is God's by common right. He is Lord of the manor of the universe. But His Church is His garden, His cultivated and fenced field, and if He should give up His rights to all the rest of the wide earth, yet He never could relinquish His rights to His separated inheritance. "The Lord's portion is His people."

How are they His? We answer, first, by His own sovereign *choice*. Before they were fashioned, all creatures lay in His mind's eye in the mass of creatureship, and it was in His power to make whom He would as vessels unto honor. He did so ordain to make His chosen and set His love upon them. When they lay in the impure mass, having all fallen, it was still in His power, through the plan of redemption, to raise up some and to make these His own special heritage. This He did altogether apart from any goodness in them at the time, or any goodness which He foresaw in them.

He had mercy on whom He would have mercy and ordained a chosen company into eternal life. These, therefore, are His by election. As our text says, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance, or as the Hebrew has it, "*the cord*" of His inheritance, an allusion to the old custom of measuring out lots by a line or cord. So by line and by lot the Lord has marked off His own chosen people, "and they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels."

They are not only His by choice, but by *purchase*. He has bought and paid for them to the utmost farthing, so that about His title there can be no dispute. Not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord's portion has been fully redeemed. There is no mortgage on His estate, no suits can be raised by opposing claimants, the price was paid in open court and the Church is the Lord's freehold forever.

See the blood-mark upon all the chosen, invisible to human eye but known to Christ, for "the Lord knows them that are His"? He forgets none of those whom He has redeemed from among men. He counts the sheep for whom He laid down His life and remembers well the Church for which He gave Himself. Should any fraudulent adversary dispute His claim, He shows His pierced hands and points to His wounded side. The emblems of His passion are the seals of His possession.

They are also His *by conquest*. Old Jacob, when he lay dying, gave to Joseph one portion above his brothers, which he had taken out of the

hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow. The Lord Jesus can truly say of His people that He has taken them out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. Your conquering hand, O Jesus, when nailed to the Cross, rent away Your children's' chains. You have trod our foes in Your anger and trampled them in Your hot displeasure. Behold their blood is sprinkled upon Your garments and You have stained all Your raiment.

Upon your necks, O you tyrants of the Church, has the Anointed put His feet. He has dashed you in pieces with His own right hand! He has broken the ties of the young lions and delivered His Israel out of the jaw of the lion and the paw of the bear. He has obtained His saints as a portion which He divides with the great, and as a spoil which He has taken from the strong. We are Christ's this day by *conquest in us*. What a battle He had in us before we would be won! How long He laid siege to our hearts! How often He sent His terms of capitulation.

But we rejected all overtures of submission. We barred our gates. We fenced our walls against Him. The Law, with its great battering ram, smote our gates till the posts rocked in their sockets, but we fortified our strongholds and fought stoutly against the Most High, vowing that we would not be subdued. But ah, do you not remember that glorious hour when He carried our hearts by storm, when He put His Cross against the wall and scaled our ramparts, planting on our strongholds the blood-red flag of His atoning mercy?

O Brethren, we are, indeed, the conquered captives of His omnipotent love. Thus chosen, purchased and subdued, the rights of our Divine possessor are undeniable, and we, His people, are the regalia of His royalty, the gems of His crown, the sheep of His pasture, the children of His love, the darlings of His heart—if He could renounce all else which owns His sway, yet can He never give them up of whom it is written, “the Lord's portion is His people.”

2. In the second place, the text shows that *the saints are the objects of the Lord's special care*. “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth”—with what object?—“To show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” The wheels of Providence are full of eyes. But in what direction are they gazing? Why, that all things may “work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” God is omnipresent and omniscient—has an eye to all creatures and all things.

He sees all immensity. He beholds all things at one gaze. Yet, “the eyes of the Lord,” in a special sense, “are upon the righteous.” And though His ears are open to all things, yet, in a peculiar manner, “His ears are open to their cry.” It is true the Lord is the eternal Watcher of the universe and never sleeps. Yet, in a very distinct sense, He is the guardian of His Church. “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.” “Behold He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

He encompasses all things by the Word of His power and He upholds all things by His might. But His power, His presence and His protection, are more peculiarly with His Church, for He is to her “a wall of fire round

about her and a glory in her midst.” The Church, then, as God’s portion, is His peculiar care. When she lay at first in her barrenness, as a corner of the vast howling wilderness, He took her under His care. He fenced and hedged her. He began to dig up by the roots her nettles, her thorns, her briars. He sent the spirit of burning into her, by which the weeds of evil were consumed. He plowed her deep with convictions. He harrowed her with the Law. He scattered into her the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.

When He saw her tender blades springing up, He watched over every one of them, sending the dewdrops, and the rain showers, and the sunbeams, and the wind, just when they were needed. And He continues still to watch, even when her harvest grows ripe and the blade has given place to the full corn in the ear. He will watch until He himself, descending from the Great White Throne, shall take the golden sickle and reap the sheaves and return to His eternal garner rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

Dear Friends, it is sweet to reflect how careful God is of His Church. We are jealous of our eyes, but the Lord keeps His people as the apple of His eye. What a wonderful affection birds have for their young. They will sooner die than let their little ones be destroyed! But like as an eagle flutters over her nest, so does the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem. What love a true husband has for his spouse! How much rather would he suffer than that she should grieve! And just such love has God towards His Church. Oh, how He cares for her! How He provides for her as a king should provide for his own queen! How He watches all her footsteps, guards all her motions.

He has her at all times beneath His eyes and protected by His hands. Hear how He tells of His care in providing for His Israel. “Now when I passed by you and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love. And I spread my skirt over you and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore unto you and entered into a Covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became Mine. Then I washed you with water. Yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you, also with brodered work and shod you with badger’s skin.

“And I girded you about with fine linen and I covered you with silk. I decked you also with ornaments and I put bracelets upon your hands and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver. And your raiment was of fine linen and silk and brodered work. You did eat fine flour and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful.”

Never was there care so tender, so perpetual, so faithful, so affectionate, as the care of God over all His chosen ones, for indeed, it is no fiction and no metaphor—the Lord’s portion really *is* His people. He covers us with His feathers and under His wings do we trust. His Truth is become our shield and buckler. The Lord is mighty in battle for His Church. He puts out His omnipotence when He first of all delivers her, and no less might does He show every day when He keeps her from falling. And He will present her at last spotless before His face. Never was castle upon a

mountain summit, fortified by nature, so impregnable as is the Church of God—

***“Munitions of stupendous rock
Her dwelling place shall be;
There shall her sons without a shock
The wreck of nature see.”***

3. The text includes the idea that *the Church is the object of the Lord’s special joy*, for a man’s portion is that in which he takes delight. Brethren, how very strong the Scripture is as to the delight which God has in His saints. I am sure you and I cannot see anything in ourselves why the Lord should take pleasure in us. We cannot take delight in ourselves, for we often have to groan, being burdened, conscious of our sinfulness. I am afraid that God’s people cannot take much delight in us, for they must perceive so much of our imperfections and our follies that they must rather lament our infirmities than admire our graces.

Oh, who would not rejoice in this transcendent Truth of God, this glorious mystery? The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy! I do not read anywhere that God delights in the cloud-capped mountains, or the sparkling stars—but I do read that He delights in the habitable parts of the earth and that His delights are with the sons of men. I do not find it written that even angels give His soul delight, nor does He say, concerning cherubim and seraphim, “I will be a father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters.” But He does say that to the poor fallen race of man—debased, depraved, dejected by their sin—but saved, exalted, glorified by His Grace!

See what terms He uses. He calls them His *dwelling place*. “In Jewry is God known, His name is great in Israel, in Salem also is His tabernacle and His dwelling place in Zion.” “For the Lord has chosen Zion. He has desired it for His habitation.” Where is a man most at ease? Why at home—

“Wherever we wander, there’s no place like home.”

Beloved, the Church is *God’s* home. And as at home a man unbends himself, takes his pleasure, manifests himself to his children as he does not unto strangers—so in the Church, the Lord unbends Himself, condescendingly manifesting Himself to them as He does not unto the world. O could you think of it, that the chosen of God are as dear to Him as your humble cottage is to you, as the rooftree of your ancestors and the place of your birth?

We are expressly told that the Church is the Lord’s *rest*. “This is My rest forever, here will I dwell for I have desired it.” As if all the world beside were His workshop and His Church His rest. In the boundless universe He is busy marshalling the stars, riding upon the wings of the wind, making the clouds His chariot. But in His Church He is at rest, in Zion the Everlasting One spends His Sabbaths!

Yet further, there is an unrivalled picture in the Word where the Lord is even represented as *singing with joy over His people*. Who could have conceived of the Eternal One as bursting forth into a song? Yet it is written, “He will rejoice over you with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” As He looked upon the world, He spoke and said, “It is very good,” but He did not sing. And as He views the works of Providence,

I hear not that He sings. But when He gazes on you and on me, the purchase of Jesus' blood—His own chosen ones—the great heart of the Infinite restrains itself no longer but, wonder of wonders, and miracle of miracles, God, the Eternal One, sings out with the joy of His soul! Truly, “the Lord's portion is His people.”

Once more, remember that the Lord represents himself as *married to His Church*. What does He say to her? “You shall be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah: for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married. As a young man marries a virgin, even so shall your God marry you. And as a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, even so shall your Lord rejoice over you.” He puts the affection, you see, in the most brilliant light. It is not only the affection of the husband to the wife, but seeing that some men are changeable, and their love grows cold, the Lord selects that hour of first love when the bridegroom, fresh and newly married, rejoices over his bride. The joy and love of the young honeymoon of married life is but a faint picture of the complacency and delight God always has in His people.

Dear Friends, this is a subject to be thought of rather than to be talked about, for I find thoughts in my heart this morning, rather than in my head, and I cannot get them out. But this I know, there cannot be a closer union between any two beings than there is between Christ and His people, for they are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. There cannot be a warmer love than this. A mother's love is nothing compared to it—yes, “she may forget her sucking child and cease to have compassion on the son of her womb. Yet will I never forget you, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”

The husband may repulse from his arms the chosen one whom once he loved so tenderly but, “*He hates putting away.*” Whom once He has embraced *He embraces forever.* “I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness and in judgment and in loving kindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness.”

Oh that this love were shed abroad this morning in our poor frozen hearts! Oh that we felt God's delight in us! For if by faith we knew all this, and by sweet experience could attest it, surely we should be better prepared to join with Jeremiah in the second text and say, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”

4. Our text teaches us that God's people are *His everlasting possession*. You will say, “Why?” There is an allusion here to the division of the portions among the different tribes. That which was the portion of Asher never could be the portion of Zebulon and that which belonged to Simeon never could belong to Dan. For there was a Law made, that if any man should lose his inheritance by debt, or should be driven to the necessity of selling it, yet at the Year of Jubilee it always came back again to him, so that, you see, no Israelite ever lost his portion.

Now, God maps out for Himself His people. He says, “These are My portion.” And do you think, Brethren, God will lose His portion? No—if He should sell His portion into the hand of the enemy for a season, yet at the Year of Jubilee it would return to Him. Glory be to God, that Year of Jubilee is come! We were sold once. It did seem as if we were no more the peo-

ple of God. But the high priest has died, the Year of Jubilee has been proclaimed, and now God's inheritance has come back to Him, and if it could be alienated again, He would recover it.

If a man is a child of God and is suffered to fall, he shall certainly be brought back by bitter repentance before he dies, that his soul at the last may be saved, for God shall not lose His heritage. Have you not noticed, in reading Scripture, how the Israelites always clung tenaciously to their portion? When Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you the worth of it in money," Naboth said to him, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you."

And so, Brethren, God will never sell His children at any price. Nor if He could have better people instead, would He change them. They are His and they shall be His while time lasts. And when time ends and eternity rolls on, He never can, He never will, cast away His chosen people. Let us in this rejoice and be exceedingly glad. "The Lord's portion is His people."

II. We turn to our second text—"THE LORD IS MY PORTION, SAYS MY SOUL."

Dear Friends, this sentence implies that true Believers have the Lord as their *sole* portion. It is not, "The Lord is *partly* my portion," not "The Lord is *in* my portion." No, He Himself makes up the sum total of my soul's inheritance. The Lord Himself is my portion. Men of this world, we are told, have their portion in this life. In the field they have it in their abundant crops, and in the house they have it in comfort, in riches. Some of them have it in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day.

But how is it God gives them so good a portion here? You may have seen a farmer when he has his meal prepared for his swine, he passes two or three of his little children in the yard as he is going out at feeding time. Why does he not give some of the meal to his children? He scoops it out till he has filled the hog's trough full, and then the swine come and eat till they lie down, full to bursting, their eyes standing out with fatness. How is it he does not give some of it to his children?

"Oh, no," says he, "This is not the children's meat," and as it is not meet to take the children's bread and give it unto dogs, so it would not be meet to take the swine's meat and give it unto children. When Martin Luther had a large sum of money sent to him, he gave it all away directly to the poor, for he said, "O Lord, You shall never put me off with my portion in this life." Now when God's children receive anything in the way of gifts from Providence, they thank God for it, and endeavor to use it for His honor and glory—but they still insist that it is not their portion.

You know, when you go to a shop to buy goods, they give you the brown paper and the string in the bargain—so when we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things are added to us. For godliness has the promise of the life that is now, as well as of that which is to come. But we don't go to buy the brown paper and the string, they are not what we are looking after—so with the true Christian, his portion, that which he seeks after—is his God. This is his *only* portion, he seeks nothing besides.

When Abraham had many children by his wife Keturah, you remember it is written he gave them their portions and sent them away. But he never did so with his Isaac. Lord, let me be Your Isaac! Give the world its portion. Give the emperor his crown. Give the rich man his money bags, send him away. But let me be a stranger with You as Isaac in his father's tent.

The man who has such a portion as this, ought not to wish for anything beyond. What can be needed beyond this portion? We are walking in the sunlight today—a fine glorious summer's day—if anyone of you should be crying in your pew this morning, and I should ask, "What are you weeping for?" and you should reply, "I am weeping because I cannot see the stars," we should think you mad. For he that has the sunlight can do without the starlight—so with the Believer. Why should he be weeping because he has lost this or lost that?—

***"You at all times, will I bless;
Having YOU, I all possess;
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with YOU?"***

St. Augustine was likely, very often, to pray, "Lord, give me Yourself." A less portion than this would be unsatisfactory. Not God's Grace merely, nor His love. All these come into the portion but, "*the Lord* is, my portion, says my soul." *More* than His attributes, *more* than His love, *more* than His Covenant, is Jehovah Himself the special portion and privilege of His own Beloved ones. "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." As God is our only portion, so He is our *own* portion—"The Lord is my portion, says my soul." I hope He is *your* portion, dear Brethren. But whether He is or not does not concern me so much as whether He is *mine*.

Come, Brethren, have you got a personal grip of this portion? Are you sure it is yours? Pray for sinners. Ask that God may bring them in, but see, first of all, to your own personal interest in these precious things. Let it go round these pews now. Can you say, "The Lord is MY portion?" Let it not be a general declaration but a particular affirmation—"The Lord is MY portion." Yes, with streaming eyes and bursting heart, many a soul here that can now see Jesus hanging on the Cross taking away all its guilt, can say, though almost choked with tears, "Yes, blessed be His name, the Lord is my portion."

Some of you are very poor. You have nothing in the world, but you can say, "The Lord is my portion." Like the old woman who, when she had nothing to eat but a dry crust of bread and only a cup of water to drink, broke the bread and said, "All this, and Jesus Christ, too!" We have heard of a great man who once took a poor Believer and said—"Look over there at those hills." "Yes, Sir." "Well, all that is mine. That farm yonder, and that one yonder, and beyond that river over there—it is all mine."

"Ah," said the Believer—"look at yonder little cottage, that is where I live and even that is *not* mine, for I have to rent it. And yet I am richer than you. I can point up yonder and say—there lies my inheritance, in Heaven's unmeasured space. And you may look as far as ever you can, you cannot see the limit of my heritage, nor find out where it ends nor where it begins."

Oh, what a blessing, Brethren, it is as if you and I can say, "He is my heritage!" Do not, I beseech you, be satisfied with generals—come to particulars. I know people think they are going to Heaven in the lump but they never will. Men go to Hell in bundles but they go to Heaven separately. "But we are a Christian nation." Nonsense about a Christian nation! We are as fairly an un-Christian nation as we are a Christian nation. "Oh but we were all made Christians when we were sprinkled." You are not such fools as to believe this abominable superstition. You know better! How can a drop of water on the forehead change the heart or affect the nature, or floods of water, for that matter? You *know* better than that.

Have you been born again from above? If you have not, you are not the children of God, and you have not a child's portion. Have you passed from death unto life? If not, you have not the portion of the living in Zion. You may, perhaps, have had your portion as the prodigal son did, who said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." But unless you are converted, unless you have been brought to put your faith in Christ, you can never have that portion which belongs to the true-born heir of Heaven, for to him God has said—"Son, you are ever with Me and all that I have is yours."

But again, the Lord is to His people an *inherited* portion. Many men have to thank God that their fathers were born before them, for *they* worked and made their money, and left their estates to them. It is not every man who is rich that owes his riches to his own industry, and certainly, if you and I are so rich as to have God for our inheritance, we owe it to the fact of our birth. How came I to be the child of God? I was born so—O no, you were born an heir of *wrath*. I know I was the *first* time but the second time I was born in the image of His Son, begotten again unto lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

You cannot earn this inheritance by working for it. You cannot purchase it. You can only gain it by inheriting it. Ask yourselves very solemnly whether you know anything of the new birth, and if you do not, as the Lord my God lives, and as your soul lives, you can have no lot or portion in this matter until you do. "If children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." But if not children, then not heirs and the heritage cannot be yours.

But further, Brethren, this heritage is also ours by *choice*. We have chosen God to be our heritage. Believer, I ask you, supposing it could be left to you now whether you would have God to be your portion, or have the most splendid earthly destiny, which would you have? Oh, you would say, "Let me have my God." At first, I grant you, the will of man is not free to choose Christ, for man chooses evil and not good and the Lord must choose our inheritance for us, or else we shall never choose it. "You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you," was the word of Christ through the Apostle to all His people. But if we are really called according to the purpose of electing love we can sing—

**"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return."**

Better to have Christ and a fiery stake, than to lose Him and wear a royal robe. Better Christ and the old Mamertine dungeon of the Apostle Paul, than to be without Christ and live in the palace of Caesar. Christ Jesus, You blessed portion of our souls! You are altogether lovely. And if we had to begin again, we would, by Your Grace, begin with You.

Again, dear Friends, God is his people's *settled* portion. When you were married, some of you, there were marriage settlements to be made, deeds to be drawn up, and lawyers called in and witnesses to sign the marriage covenant. I suppose that when the Princess Alice gets her portion, it will be settled upon her in some way or other. For where there are great portions, there should be settlements. Blessed be the name of the Most High, there is a marriage settlement made upon all the Lord's people—their portion is settled on them.

"Yes, and amen in Christ Jesus," all the promises have been made to the chosen seed. Heaven and earth may pass away but the Covenant of Grace shall not be removed. The covenant of day and night may be broken. The waters may again cover the earth, sooner than the decree of Divine Grace be frustrated. Every promise of the Covenant is a consequence to every heir of Heaven, nor can Satan break them. No Parliamentary act passed on earth, no deed perpetrated in the conclaves of Hell, can ever affect the eternal, immutable, everlasting settlements of Covenant Grace which are made in Christ Jesus, ordered in all things and sure. The Lord is my settled portion.

The Lord is my *all-sufficient* portion. God fills himself. And as Manton says, in his exposition of the 119th Psalm, "If God is all-sufficient in Himself, He must be all-sufficient for us." And then he uses this figure—"That which fills an ocean will fill a bucket. That which will fill a gallon will fill a pint. Those revenues that will defray an emperor's expenses, are enough for a beggar or a poor man—so when the Lord Himself is satisfied with Himself, and it is His happiness to enjoy Himself, there needs no more—there is enough in God to satisfy." This is clear reasoning, Brethren, and surely if the expenses of Heaven's court never did affect God's riches, all the expenses of our trial and affliction while we are here, never can diminish the unsearchable riches of God which are in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But you will tell me that man's wishes are very large and that it is hard to satisfy them. Ah, my Brethren, I know they are—with anything here below. You may have heard, I dare say, of the gentleman who told his servant, "You have been a very faithful servant to me, John, and as you are getting old, I should like to give you a pension. Now, what do you think would satisfy you?" "Well, master," said he, "I think if I had fifty pounds a year I should be very well satisfied, indeed." "Well, think it over," said the master, "and come to me and let me know."

So the day comes. "Now, what do you want to satisfy you?" "Well, Sir, as I said before, I should never want for anything, or wish for anything in this world, if I had fifty pounds a year." "Well, John, it shall be done. There is the settlement for you—you shall have it." That man went out of the door and said to a friend, "I wish I had said a hundred." So, you see, it is not easy to satisfy man. When he thinks he is satisfied, he still sees

something beyond, the horse leech in his heart still cries, "Give, give." But God is a satisfying portion. You cannot wish for anything more than this—

***"All my capacious powers can wish,
In You is richly stored;
Nor can my soul conceive a joy
Which is not in my Lord."***

I think I may add—and the experience of every Believer will bear me out—we have today a portion in which we take *intense delight*. I have tried in a poor way to show that God had a delight in His people. Beloved, do not His people, when they are in a right state of heart, have an intense delight in Him? Friends, we have known what it is to have delight in our children, delight in our Church. We have had delight in this House of Prayer. We have delight in one another, in sweet companionship and communion. But if you have ever tasted delight in God, you will say with Rutherford, "I have eaten the bread of angels and my mouth is out of taste for the brown bread of this world."

God gives us "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." "I will satiate the soul of My priests with fatness and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord." Oh the delights that we have in God! They are not ankle-deep delights, nor knee-deep delights. But they are a river to swim in. Here we can bathe our souls—here we riot and revel in inexhaustible luxuriance of delight. Here our spirit stretches her wings and mounts like an eagle. Here she expands herself and only wishes she were more capacious, and therefore she cries, "Lord, expand me, enlarge my heart, that I may hold more of You."

Often have we felt in the spirit with Rutherford, when he cried, "Lord, make me a heart as large as Heaven, that I may hold You in it! But since the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You, Lord, make my soul as wide as seven heavens, that I may contain Your fullness." "O that the Lord would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coasts."

And lastly, this is to the saints of God an *eternal* portion. Ungodly Man, you have your portion now. It will melt, Sir! When the last fire comes, it will be consumed. But the lot of the Believers will outlast the fire. The conflagration which devours all the work of man's hands shall not be able to touch, nor even to scorch any part or parcel of the portion of Believers. Indeed, it is in the world to come that Believers shall have their portion. Here they have none except trials and troubles—"in the world you shall have tribulation." But as God cannot be seen and as He is the Believer's portion, so their portion cannot be seen.

It is a good remark of an excellent commentator upon that passage, "For which cause He is not ashamed to be called their God." He writes to this effect, "If it were only for this world, God would be ashamed to be called His people's God, for His adversaries would say, 'Look at those people, how tried they are, what troubles they have, who is their God? And, says he, the Lord speaks as if He might be ashamed to be called their God, if this life were all. But the Scripture says, 'Why God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city.'"

Thus may the Lord turn upon His enemies and Say, "I am their God and although I *do* chasten them sorely, and lead them through the deep waters, yet see what I am preparing for them—see them as they shall be when I shall wipe all tears from their eyes and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." It is in the prospect of bliss so ecstatic, joy so boundless, glory so eternal, that He is not ashamed to be called their God.

We are not ashamed, Brethren, to call Jehovah our God. Now let us go our way this morning to our homes. Let us eat the fat and drink the sweet in God. Let us put on our beauteous array and be appareled with the sun and have the moon under our feet. Let us go forth as princes of the blood-royal, and act according to our quality. Let us rejoice in the Lord always. Let us show to the world that we are a happy and a blessed people, until our adversaries shall have their mouths watering while they say, "Let us live the life and die the death of the righteous." "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places and we have a goodly heritage."

Dear Friends, I shall only ask in conclusion—are there not many here who cannot say, "You are my portion, O Lord"? Will you do me this favor this morning? When you get home will you think what your portion is, and cast your accounts up? If you cannot put God in the list, I tell you that when you have cast all your portion up, it comes to nothing. It may glitter for a season, but it shall go out like brambles that crackle under the pot but which die out afterwards in a little heap of white ashes. You have nothing if you have not God.

Ask if it is worth while for the sake of this empty world to lose eternal things—and if you are convinced it is not, then may God lead you to put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and in the Lord Jesus only. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Or, to give you the full, as Christ puts it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He that with his heart believes in Christ and with his mouth makes a profession of faith, (and it should be done in Baptism), shall be saved. God grant us His Grace to believe, then our portion is sure forever and ever, in this world and in the world to come.

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“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK!”

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***“The LORD is good to the soul that seeks Him.”
Lamentations 3:25.***

I DO not know whether it has ever struck you what a grand man Jeremiah was. If you were to read the book of his prophecy through, from beginning to end, and make yourself familiar with the circumstances under which the Prophet spoke and wrote, I think you would come to admire him as one of the greatest men who ever lived, for he was not, like Isaiah, brightened and cheered by having a joyful message to deliver, but he had received a sorrowful burden from his Lord—and he faithfully carried it out—and when the people rejected his testimony and refused his message, he went on delivering it all the same. There was no gleam of success to gladden his ministry, yet he never flinched! Nobody seemed to believe in him—he was the jest and the by-word of the people, but that did not matter to him at all. He was tender and affectionate, so that he cried, “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

Yet he was as stern and unflinching as if his face had been made of adamant stone. I think him second to no man in the whole list of human beings who have ever lived. Therefore, when I found some of those with whom I have been in controversy of late describing one of my protests against false doctrine and worldliness as a, “Jeremiad,” or a Jeremiah’s Lamentation, I said to myself, “That is the highest compliment they could pay me.” If they call me a fool, even, I will, nevertheless, accept the epithet with delight! I count it no dishonor to have to lament as Jeremiah did, and to have to bear a sorrowful testimony even as Jeremiah did—and in that great day when the Lord rewards His servants, the rewards will not be in proportion to the way in which their testimony was *received*, but in proportion to the fidelity with which they *delivered* it! If Jeremiah is rejected of men, yet, if he has delivered his Master’s message, he is not rejected of his Master! And in that great day when God, the Judge of all, shall bring us to account, we who have spoken out of the depths of our soul and have had our testimony made jest and a by-word, shall receive none the less honor from our Lord if we have faithfully delivered it!

I begin with this thought, concerning the man who uttered my text, because the people who speak somewhat sorrowfully and sadly are said to be “pessimists.” It is an ugly word, yet I have had it applied to myself. Whereas other men who speak very brightly—possibly more brightly than they ought to speak—those who have rose-colored glasses for everything, are called “optimists.” Well now, when a man is in deep distress of mind and in sore trouble of heart, if a person comes to him, and says, “Oh, my dear Sir, there is really not much the matter with you! It is a very simple thing to cure, and I will soon get you through it,” you say to yourself, “That gentleman is an optimist,” and you make very large deductions from what he has to say because you feel that he is inclined to flatter, and to put a brighter face upon things than they ought to wear!

But if another person comes, who is called a pessimist, one who always makes the worst of everything—a man who writes “Jeremiads” and who utters lamentations—if he, nevertheless, says something very bright and cheering, you say to yourself, “Now I know that what he says is true. There must be something really cheering and hopeful when such a man as *that*, who dares to look at the dark side of things, can yet venture to encourage me.” Well now, it is the Prophet Jeremiah, in his Book of Lamentations, who says to you who are seeking the Lord, “The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.” You do not need to take any discount off his words of cheer! Depend upon it, what he says is true! If he of the weeping eyes. If he of the sorrowful spirit, nevertheless, in all the bitterness of his misery, bears testimony that the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him, then, depend upon it, it is so! So we begin at an advantage. I pray you to believe the text because of the man who was inspired to utter it.

I shall try briefly and earnestly, first, *to describe a seeking soul*. Next, *to assure him that God is good to him*. And then *further to cheer him on in his seeking*.

I. First, I am to try to DESCRIBE A SEEKING SOUL.

Everybody does not seek the Lord. There are many who say to God, by their actions if not by their words, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” The man who seeks the Lord is the man who feels that he needs Him. *He is under a sense of need*—a need which he could hardly describe, but which, nevertheless, weighs very heavily upon him. He needs something very great, but he hardly knows what it is. He feels that he has a void—an emptiness within that needs filling. There is a something that he believes would content him if he could get it, but he has not got it yet. He feels that he is not right with God. He feels like one who is far off from God. He feels guilty and he needs pardon. He feels sinful and he needs renewing. He feels everything that he ought not to be and he wants to be changed, to be made a new man. That is the one who seeks the Lord—a man does not seek after that which he does not want—but a conscious and urgent need drives the troubled soul to seek after God.

This seeker, also, is one who, though he does not know it, *has a measure of faith*, for he believes, deep down in his heart, that if he could

once get to God, all would be well with him. He has heard of God in Christ Jesus and he says within himself, “Oh, if I could but find this blessed Mediator! If I could but discover this glorious Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, it would be well with me.” He has not believed so as to appropriate Christ, but he believes so much as to wish that he *could* appropriate Him. This is the man who seeks the Lord. We do not seek for that which appears to have no value in it, but, in proportion as a man has, first, a sense of his need, and secondly some idea of the value of the great blessing which he needs, he becomes an earnest seeker! I hope I am talking to some persons of this kind as I am describing their true character.

Further, this seeker *sometimes seeks very unwisely*. He goes to seek God where he will never find Him, like the holy women did when they went to the sepulcher to find the risen Christ, and the angel asked them why they were seeking the living among the dead! When a soul wants God, and needs salvation, it will begin to seek the Lord by its own doing, by its own feelings, by its own strange eccentricities, perhaps. It wants God and it must have Him! You know how a starving man will break through stone walls to get at the food that he so terribly needs, and, often, a man who is seeking after God would go through stone walls, or over them, if he might but find Him—yet that is *not* the way to seek the Lord. “Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ, again, from the dead).” Christ is not far off, He is very near you—and yet the seeker is unwisely seeking after God as though He were far away—and for Christ as though he had to do some strange and wonderful thing in order to find Him. Some of you think that you must have a remarkable dream. Others expect an angelic vision. Some are waiting to hear a very extraordinary sermon and to feel very amazing emotions. This is the nature of seekers, that they often seek in a very unwise way. But still, they do seek—and it is a mercy that they do—for, “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

I will tell you what true seekers do when they act wisely. I notice that *they often get alone*. When you begin to seek the Lord, my young Friend, you will steal away by yourself. Father and mother will say, “We do not quite know what has come over him, he seems so different from what he used to be. He gets up into his little room—we think he must go there to pray.” If his parents are gracious people, they begin to have great hope of him. I remember times when I was never so happy as when I could get alone. Seekers, true seekers, will find some quiet place. That is a difficult thing to find in this noisy London, yet a real seeker will make even a crowded street to be his place of retirement, or he will walk down some back alley and be thinking, and crying, and seeking and groaning! But in the country, how often have I known young lads to get down a sawpit, or up a hayloft, or in the corner of a barn, or anywhere where they could but sit in quiet meditation and try to *think* their way to Jesus’ feet, that they might find Him if they could. That getting alone is a good sign.

When a stag is wounded, it delights to hide in the recesses of the forest that it may bleed and die alone. And when God has shot His arrow of conviction into a human heart, one of the first signs of the wounding is that the man likes to get alone.

I will tell you another thing about the true seeker. You will find *that he begins to bring out his Bible*, that much-neglected Book. Now that he is seeking the Lord, he knows that—

**“Within this sacred Volume lies,
The mystery of mysteries.”**

And he begins to study his Bible as he never did before! It is a blessed sign when the young man or the young woman begins to take an interest in the Word of God and searches the Scriptures, saying, “Lord, bless this Book to me. The Christ is here. He feeds among the lilies of Your revealed Truth. Oh, that I might meet Him, and that I might call Him mine!”

And as, perhaps, in his study of the Scriptures he meets with difficulties, you will find that this seeking young man is anxious to *go and hear the Word preached*, for the Word rightly preached has a warmth about it and a vividness which are not always so manifest to the seeker in his reading of the Word. If you are true seekers, I know that you will want to go and hear a preacher who touches your conscience, who speaks to your heart and who longs to bring you to Christ. My dear Hearers, I do not mind where you go on the Sabbath if you really hear the Truth of God faithfully preached. As far as I am concerned, there are plenty of people here, but I do wish that, on the Sabbath, and on weeknights too, you would *not* have any desire to go and hear a “clever” preacher, or to some fine musical service, but that you would say, “We have to care, first, for our immortal souls, and we long to seek and find eternal life, therefore let us go where the minister preaches Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Let us go where we can hear the Gospel of the Grace of God, for that is what we need.” You cannot afford to throw away a single hour, either in listening to human oratory or to any other kind of performance. With you, it must be, “Give me Christ, or else I die.” Therefore, be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached.

That is, then, another mark of a true seeker—he loves to be alone, he searches the Scriptures, he goes as much as he can to hear the Gospel preached.

And there is another sign of the true seeker that I always love to see—*he likes to get into godly company*. He does not care, now, for the friends he once so much admired—his merry friends who laughed away the years—if he can but get where he can hear a few poor people talking about Jesus! Something like John Bunyan, you remember, who saw three or four godly women at Bedford talking about the things of God and the tinker drew near and listened to their gracious conversation, though their talk about the new birth was beyond his comprehension! That is good seeking when you turn eavesdropper to hear about Christ, when you like to listen to some poor neighbor who does not know much more than you know, yourself, but who, in her simple language, talks

about an experience of the things of God to which you have not as yet attained, but which you wish you had felt and known!

There is another mark of a seeker that is still better—“*Behold, he prays.*” Possibly, he used to repeat a form of prayer, but he has given that up and now he talks to God straight out of his heart and asks for what he really needs. And he not only does that morning and evening, but he is praying during most of the day! If you watch him from the other side of the counter, you may hear a sigh every now and then. Or when he is at his work, driving the plane, or using the hammer—if you are close to him, you may see his lips moving and you may catch such words as these, “Savior, reveal Yourself to me. Blood of Christ, cleanse me. Spirit of God, renew me.” That is one of the men who are seeking the Lord!

I think there will be one more mark that you will see upon a sincere seeker—he will quit all that is evil as much as possible and he will seek after that which is good—and especially *he will seek after faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. He has heard it said that he that believes in Him has everlasting life and he says to himself, “Oh, that I could believe in Him!” You will see him, now, *trying* to believe, very much like a little child tries to take his first steps in walking alone. His mother holds out an apple and baby makes a daring venture to try, with three or four steps to get across to where mother holds out the bribe! Oh, I love to see poor souls trying to trust Christ, trying to rest in Jesus! They often make sorry work of it, but still, the Lord accepts it, for with their *hearts* they are really trying to rest in Jesus! If, poor trembling Seeker, your faith should bring you no comfort because it is so weak—keep on trusting to Christ!

When the bronze serpent was lifted up, all who looked to it were healed. There were, doubtless, some clear bright eyes that saw the bronze serpent from its head to its tail and, as they looked, they lived. But there were probably others who were so bitten by the serpents that their eyes were swollen and dim—they could only see out of the corners and the death-damp seemed to blind even that little bit of sight which they had—but, oh, if they could only get just a *glimpse*, so as just to see the glittering brass, though they could not make out the shape of the serpent, yet they lived! They were bid to look and if they looked, and could not see, yet the promise was not to the seeing, but to the *looking!* And so, as they looked, they were healed! Thus look to Jesus and you shall live.

I trust that many seekers here have come as far as this. If so, I may now conduct them to the next stage of my sermon.

II. I want, in the second place, to ASSURE THE SEEKING SOUL THAT THE LORD IS GOOD TO HIM—“The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

“Ah,” says one, “my heart is almost ready to break! I have been seeking so long, I feel so sad, I am so discouraged.” But, “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.” Let me show you this Truth of God very rapidly.

First, *it is good of Him to have set you seeking at all*. He might have left you in your sins as He has left so many millions of your fellow men. He might have left you to be content with this vain, wicked world. At this moment you might have been leaning across the counter of the gin palace instead of listening to the Word of the Lord. Yes, instead of going home to pray, you might have been getting to the harlot's haunt and, tomorrow, instead of coming to the Prayer Meeting, you might have been found where the multitude amuse themselves with vice. Thank God that you are a seeker, for there is something good in that fact! On a dark night you may be grateful for one star shining in the sky, or even for a single match—it is very little, you think, but thank God for that little! “The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him,” in setting him seeking at all!

But God is also good to the seeker *in giving him some gleams of comfort*. Did you say that you had been seeking the Lord for months? Well, how is it that you have kept on seeking? I think it must be because you have, sometimes, had a few rays of light. I cannot give you any better evidence than my own. I was long in seeking Christ and for that I blame myself, not Christ. But there were times, before I found Him, when I almost met with Him. I did not see Him, but I seemed to see the trees move as He passed along! I did not see Him, but I heard His footsteps and, sometimes I went home and said to myself, “Oh, yes, I shall find Him! I shall not cry to Him in vain.” I even thought, sometimes, that I had laid hold of Him and that I had trusted Him—and though I went back, again, into despondency, yet I was not without hope of ultimately finding Him.

You know what it is, sometimes, when you are very hungry and you cannot get a meal, if you can get just a bite or two of *something*, it keeps you up till the mealtime comes. Well, it was like that when I was hungering and thirsting for Christ. Many a crumb this poor dog picked up from under the Master's table and so I was encouraged to keep on seeking till I found my Savior. Is it not so with you, dear Friend? Yes, the Lord is good to them that seek Him by just keeping their courage up and preventing them from sinking utterly into despair! Is He not good in keeping back the temptation which might have destroyed you? The foul insinuations of Satan trouble you, but they might be worse than they are! You have been driven almost to despair, but not quite. You have grated against the rock, but you are not shipwrecked yet. “He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind.” Thank God for that! “The Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

I think that He is also good *in not letting us rest short of Himself*. You would have liked to have had comfort long ago, would you not? Yes, but comfort is not the main thing that you require—you need *safety*. Often the surgeon, when he has a bad case, will not let the wound heal. “No, not yet,” he says. “if that wound heals too soon, there will be more mischief coming from it.” So he lets in his lancet again and cuts out a bit of proud flesh. And our Lord will not let us close up the wound that sin has made lest it is but a sorry healing that will end in a worse wound than

before! I pray God that no one who is really seeking Christ may ever be able to rest till he gets to Him. There is good resting at the foot of the Cross, but you want to rest before you get there! I thank God for not letting you rest until you get to Christ. And I hope you will say—

**“I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”**

Make that your resolve and may the Spirit of God keep you up to it! If so, you, too, will also prove that “the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

But He is much better to them that seek Him than you have ever imagined, for *He has given such rich promises to seekers*. Oh, the blessed invitations of Christ! “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “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.” “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” This blessed Book is full of such promises as these—just the kind of promises that seeking souls need! And they all prove that the Lord is, indeed, good to them that seek Him.

He is also good to seekers because *He has made the way of salvation so plain*. Brothers and Sisters, there are certain gentlemen, nowadays, who want us to have what they call an advanced theology, an eclectic religion which will suit those who are supposed to be “cultured!” O God, save me from ever hearing such a thing as that! I want to be the means of saving to the poor and needy, the ignorant and the fallen—and God wishes to save such people—and, therefore, He puts the Gospel very plainly, “Believe and live. Trust the great Sacrifice, rely on Jesus Crucified and you are saved, and saved forever.” A man with an intellect not much above that of an idiot may understand this Gospel and enjoy it! While a man with the greatest mental powers cannot understand it any better—no, he cannot understand it at all unless the Spirit of God shall reveal it to him! I thank God that it is not a difficult way of salvation that He has laid before us, but that it is simple, or as men say, “as plain as a pikestaff.” God bring us all to accept this gracious plan of salvation!

Then, once more, is it not very good of the Lord *in being found of seekers in due time*? There is no true seeker who shall die in his sins. If you are sincerely seeking, you shall find—this is promised in our Lord’s own words that we read just now—“For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” If I could take you through the whole dread region of Hell. If we could pause at every cell where the finally impenitent are shut up without hope. And if it were possible to interrogate every lost spirit, there would not be found, there, a single one that sincerely sought the Lord through Jesus Christ! No one shall be able to stand up at the Last Great Day and say, “I came to Jesus, but He cast me out. I trusted Him, but He did not keep His promise.” No, my dear Hearer, if ever you shall be lost, it will be because you never came to Christ, because you never trusted Him, because you

would not have Him as your Savior! But if you come to Christ—poor, ragged, defiled, loathsome, guilty up to the hilt—if you come to Christ, remember that He said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And that Word of God still stands true! If you seek the Lord with all your heart, you shall surely find Him, for He “is good to the soul that seeks Him.”

I try to speak to you very plainly, as if I were talking to you by your own fireside. I do not feel at any great distance from you in standing here to speak to all of you round about me, yet I half wish that I could get a hold of your hands, you unconverted ones, and say to you, “Believe that my Lord is good to them that seek Him! Believe it and seek Him for yourselves!” He is a good Lord. We sang, a few minutes ago—

**“Oh, hope of every contrite heart!
Oh, joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind You are!
How good to those who seek!”**

Those are not mere words—they are the very Truth of God! He is, indeed, good to those who seek Him.

III. But, lest I weary any seeker where I want to win him, I shall close by FURTHER CHEERING HIM ON IN HIS SEEKING.

Friend, be of good comfort, *Christ is seeking you*. It is written, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” If I were at this time seeking a person in London, I might have a long and difficult task—it would be like the proverbial “hunting for a needle in a haystack.” But suppose I knew that the person I was seeking was also seeking me? I think then I should say that there was a *double* probability of our meeting! If I am seeking him, and he is seeking me, and especially if he who seeks me is a man of high intelligence and wide knowledge, we shall meet one of these mornings or evenings, depend upon it! So, if you are seeking Christ, that is hopeful. But if Christ is seeking you and He knows all about you—all the ins and outs of you poor life—He and you will come together soon, I am persuaded of it! You are drawing nearer to each other every hour and it will not be long before your arms are about His neck and His arms about yours! You will be rejoicing in Him and He will be rejoicing over you!

I want to give you another word of good cheer, my seeking Friend. *It may not be long before you find the Savior*. It may, indeed, be so little a while that, before the clock strikes again, you will have found Him! Why not? “Oh,” you say, “I wish it might be so! Oh, that I might find the Lord in that short time!” Well, look at me! I had been seeking Christ some four or five years under a heavy burden of sin. I remember well that Sabbath morning in the month of January, 1850, for there was a very severe snowstorm. I was going to the Congregational Chapel at Colchester that morning, but it snowed so heavily that I turned into the little Primitive Methodist Chapel, merely because of the heaviness of that snowstorm.

I was cold at heart, almost despairing. I thought that I would never find the Savior, but between half-past ten o’clock, when I entered that place, and half-past twelve o’clock, when I was back at home, again,

what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life! Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, “Something wonderful has happened to you!” And I was eager to tell them all about it. I was like Bunyan when he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed field all about his conversion! Yes, I had looked to Jesus *as I was*, and found in Him my Savior! Well now, this October Sabbath night, you, dear Heart, have been seeking the Lord for ever so long. You will not need to seek Him any more if you will but look to Him—that is all you have to do! Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him and, as you look to Him, the great transaction will be done—your burden will be gone, the joy of salvation will be given to you from Heaven by God’s own right hand—and you shall have a new song in your mouth, your feet shall be set upon the Rock and your goings shall be established!

And mark you this—*when the blessing comes*, it will be worth waiting for! When the pardon of your sin comes, you will say, “I do not regret my cries and tears, my weary waiting and anxious seeking. He has come! He has come! HE has come, my Lord and my God!” Why, if I had to wait at the posts of His door from youth to old age, yet if I found Him at last, it would well repay all my waiting! The joy and peace through believing, *which come from Christ*, are a wonderful off-set against the tears and sorrows that we have endured while we have been seeking Him.

This is my closing thought—you *have no need to go about seeking Christ any longer*. You have no need to wait even five minutes before you find Him, for it is written, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Do you know what it is to believe on Him, to trust Him? Do so now! “It would be a great venture,” says one. Then venture on Him! “Would He save me?” Try Him! You have heard, I dare say, of the African who came over to England. Before he came, the missionary told him that, sometimes, it was so cold in England that the water grew hard and men could walk on it. Now, the man had heard a great many things that were not true which he had believed, but this, he said, he would never believe! It was “one great big lie, for nobody ever could walk on water.” When he woke up, one December morning, and the stream was frozen over, he still said that he would not believe it. Even when his friend went on the ice and stood there, and said, “Now you can see that what I told you was true. This is water, yet it is hard, and it bears me up.” The African would not believe it, till his friend said to him, “Come along,” and he gave him a pull and dragged him on the ice, and then he said, “Yes, it is true, for it bears me up.”

I would like to give some of you a bit of a pull like that! I am resting on Christ, on Christ alone, and He bears *me* up! Come along and try Him for yourselves! May the Lord lead you to do so! There never yet was a heart that truly trusted in Christ that was deceived by Him! Remember that verse which we sang at the beginning of the service, and—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!”***

***None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"***

Then shall you know for certain that "the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him." God bless and save you, everyone, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 7:7-29.**

Verse 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you.* He that will not ask for it deserves to go without it. Have you ever asked for it? If not, whose fault is it that you have it not?

7. *Seek, and you shall find.* How can you hope to find if you do not seek? Have you never found it? Have you never sought it? And if you have never sought it, how do you excuse yourselves for your neglect?

7. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Is that all—knock? Is the gate of Heaven not opened to you? Have you ever knocked? Do you wonder, therefore, that the door is shut? Take care, for the time may come when you will knock and the door will *not* be opened to you, for, "when once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door," then knocking shall be in vain. But at present this verse is still God's gracious word of *command and promise*—let me read it to you again—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

8. *For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.* When you are dealing with men, this is not always true. You may ask and *not* receive. You may seek and *not* find—you may knock and *not* have the door opened to you. But when you deal with *God*, there are no failures or refusals! Every true asker receives; every true seeker finds; and every true knocker has the door opened to him! Will you not try it and prove for yourself that it is so?

9-11. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?* You not only give, but you know how to give so as not to disappoint the asker. It is most blessedly so with the great Father in Heaven! He will not give you that which will mock and disappoint you—He will give you bread, not a stone—fish, not a serpent! No, more, He will give you the Bread of Life, and the Water of Life, that you may live forever!

12. *Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.* This is rightly called, "the golden rule." Christ says of it that it is, "the Law and the Prophets." It is the essence of them, it is the sum and substance of the highest morality. What you would that others should do to you, do that to them. Do not let that golden rule remain merely as a record in this Book, but take it out with you into your daily life. If we did all act to others as we would that others should act to us, how different would the

lives of many men become! Ours would be a happy world if this Law of Christ were the law of England and the law of all nations! God send us the Spirit by whom, alone, we shall be able to obey so high a rule!

13. *Enter you in at the strait gate. The narrow gate.*

13, 14. *For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.* Do not try to go with the majority—truth is usually with the minority. Do not count heads and say, “I am for that which has the most on its side,” but prefer that which is least liked among men! Choose that which is most difficult, most trying to flesh and blood—that which gives you least license because—“strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.” You will not hit upon it, then, in a “happy-go-lucky” sort of style. Heaven’s gate is not found open by accident—there was never anybody yet who was saved by accident! No, “few there are that find it,” is still true. God grant that we may be among the few! And why should we not be?

15. *Because of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* There are always plenty of them around! There is nothing of the sheep about them but the skin—and there is no connection between that skin and those that wear it.

16-20. *You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you shall know them.* You may judge men as well as trees that way—and you may judge doctrines that way. That which gives a license to sin cannot be true. But that which makes for holiness is true, for, somehow, truth of doctrine and holiness of life run together. We cannot expect holiness to grow out of lies, but we may expect all manner of evil to come out of false teaching.

21. *Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of My Father, which is in Heaven.* Practice is the true test, not words. Not he that says, “Lord, Lord,” but, “he that does the will of God.” Not he that merely has good words on his tongue, but he that has the will of God laid up in his heart and worked out in his life—that is the man who “shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

22, 23. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.* If our lives are evil, it does not matter to what denomination we belong! We may be clever preachers, or mighty teachers. We may fancy that we have had dreams and visions. We may set ourselves up to be some great ones, but

if we have not done the will of God, we shall, at the last, hear Christ say to us, “Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.”

24, 25. *Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.* He was a good man and a practical man, yet he was also a *tried* man. His house was built on the rock, but that did not prevent the rain descending, the floods coming and the winds blowing! The highest type of godliness will not save you from troubles and trials! It will, in some measure, even necessitate them. But, blessed be God, here lies the gem of the parable or narrative—“It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” It could stand the strain and endure the test, for it had a good foundation.

26, 27. *And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* He was a great hearer, but he was a bad *doer*—yet he thought that he was a good doer, for he built a house. Alas, the house was on the sand! There was no real obedience to Christ, no true trusting in Him and so, when the time of trouble came—and trouble will come even to the hypocrite and to the false professor—we read of his house, “It fell: and great was the fall of it,” because it could never be built up again! It fell hopelessly! It fell forever! Therefore, “Great was the fall of it.”

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* There was a force and power about what Jesus said. He spoke from the heart. He spoke with the accent of conviction, whereas the scribes and Pharisees only spoke magisterially and officially, with no heart in their utterance—and there was, therefore, no power about it. God give to all of us the Grace to know the power of the Words of Christ! Amen.

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***“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.”
Lamentations 3:27.***

YOKE-BEARING is not pleasant, but it is good. It is not every pleasant thing that is good, nor every good thing that is pleasant. Sometimes the goodness may be just in proportion to the unpleasantness. Now, it is childish to be always craving for sweets—those, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, should prefer the wholesome to the palatable. It ought to reconcile us to that which is unsavory when we are informed that it is good! A little child is not easily reconciled that way, because, as yet, he cannot think and judge. But the man of God ought to find it very easy to quiet every murmur and complaint as soon as he perceives that, though unpleasant, the thing is good.

Since, my dear Friends, we are not very good judges, ourselves, of that which is good for us anymore than our children are, and since we expect our little ones to leave the choice of their diet with us, will it not be wise of us to leave everything with our heavenly Father? We can judge what is pleasant, but we cannot discern that which is good for us. But He can judge and, therefore, it will be always well for us to leave all our affairs in His hands and say, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Since we are quite certain upon Scriptural authority that whatever the Lord sends to His people will work out for their benefit, we ought to be perfectly resigned to the Lord’s will.

No, much more—we ought to be *thankful* for all His appointments even when they displease the flesh—being quite certain that His will is the best that can be and that if we could see the end from the beginning it is exactly what we should choose if we were as wise and good as our heavenly Father is. Our shoulders bow themselves with gladness to the burden which Jesus declares to be profitable to us! This assurance from His lips makes His yoke easy to bear. Our text tells us of something which, though not very comfortable, is good—“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth!”

The illustration is drawn from cattle. The bullocks have to bear the yoke. They go in pairs and the yoke is borne upon their shoulders. The yoke is somewhat burdensome. If the bullock is not broken when it is young, it will never make a good plowing ox. It will be fretted and troubled with the labor it will have to do. It will be very hard work to drive it and the farmer will accomplish but little plowing. It is good for the bullock to be brought into subjection while it is young—and so it is with all sorts of animals—the horse must be broken while he is a colt. And if a certain pe-

riod of that horse's life is allowed to pass over without its being under the trainer's hand, it will never make a thoroughly useful horse.

If you want to train a dog you must take him while he is young and teach him his work. That is the metaphor. It is just so with men. It is good for us that we are broken while we are yet young and learn to bear the yoke in our youth. If you take the text naturally as uttering a truth of ordinary life, it is still worth considering. Even apart from the Grace of God and apart from religion, it is a great blessing for a man to bear the yoke in his youth! That is to say, first, *it is good for us when we are young to learn obedience*. It is half the making of a man to be placed under rule and taught to bear restraint.

When young people grow older they will have to be very much a law unto themselves. There may be no father living to warn them lovingly and no mother to gently guide them. Young people will be older people and govern themselves—and no one is fit to do that till he has learned to be obedient. The proverb is, "boys will be boys," but I do not think so—they will be *men* if we let them have time. And unless they learn self-restraint and habits of obedience while they are boys, they are not likely to make good men. He who cannot obey is not fit to rule—he who never learned to submit will make a tyrant when he obtains power.

It is good that every child should be broken in, delivered from his foolish self-will and made to feel that he has superiors, masters and governors. Then, when it shall come his turn to be a leader and a master, he will have the more kindly empathy to those who are under him. Be you sure of this, that if he does not learn the drill of obedience he will never be a good soldier in the battle of life.

It is good for young people to bear the yoke, too, in the sense of acquiring, in their early days, knowledge. If we do not learn when we are young, when shall we learn? Some who have begun to study late in life, have yet achieved a good deal, but it has been with much difficulty. If you do not use the machinery of the mind in youth, it gets rusty. But if it is used from the very first and kept continually in action and well oiled, it will go on easily throughout the whole of life. Our early days are favorable to the acquirement of knowledge and every lad that is an apprentice should make the best of his apprenticeship—he will never make much of a journeyman if he does not.

Every man that is starting in life, while he is yet young, should do all that he possibly can to acquire full equipment, for if he does not, he will know the absence of it sooner or later. If a man starts upon life's voyage and has left his anchor at home, or forgotten his provisions, he will find out his deficiencies when he gets to sea. And when the storm begins to howl through the cordage he will wish that he had listened to the dictates of prudence and had been better prepared for life's perilous voyage.

It is good for young people, too—we are now talking about the natural meaning of the passage—*good for them that they should encounter difficulties and troubles when they begin life*. The silver spoon in the mouth with which some people are born is very apt to choke them. There are hundreds of people who have never been able to speak out because of that

dreadful silver spoon! It is not every man that is the richer in the long run, even in mere gold and silver, for having commenced with capital. I believe you will generally find that the rich men who have been, “self-made,” as they call it, came to London with a half-crown in their pockets.

I have noticed that thirty pence is about the amount they leave home with and that half-crown, neither less nor more, becomes the nest egg of a fortune. Young men who begin with thousands of pounds often end with nothing at all. It is good for a man that he should have a rough battle when life begins—that he should not be lapped in dainty ease and find everything arranged according to his will—he will never develop his muscles, he will never make a man—unless there is hard work for him to do. Those long hours, that stern thinking, those weary bones and all that, of which young people, nowadays, are very apt to complain about—though they do not work half as hard as their fathers, nor above a tenth as hard as their grandfathers—all these things, within reason and measure, help to make men, and I only hope that the easier times, which are now happily in fashion, may not breed a softer and a less manly nature among our young men.

It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke of labor, trial and difficulty in his youth. And if we could lift the yoke from every weary shoulder it would not be wise to do so. Many a man who has succeeded in life is very thankful to God that he had, in his early years, to bear a little poverty and to work hard and toil, for he never would have come to be what he is if it had not been for the strengthening and educating influence of trial.

It is not, however, my business to preach about these matters at any length. I am not a moral lecturer, but a minister of the Gospel. I have fulfilled a duty when I have given the first meaning to the text and now I shall use it for nobler ends.

I. First of all, IT IS GOOD TO BE A CHRISTIAN WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG. It is good for a man to bear Christ’s yoke in his youth. I shall not ask you to pardon me if I speak here as one who has tried and proved it. Surely I may do so without egotism, for it is not my own honor, but God’s, that I shall speak of! What the Lord has worked in me—of that I will speak.

At 15 years of age I was brought to know the Lord and to confess Him and I can, therefore, speak as one who bore the yoke in his youth. And, young people, if I have never to address you again, I should like to say to you it has been good for me. Ah, how good, I cannot tell you, but so good that I earnestly wish that every one of you would bear my Master’s yoke in his youth! I could not wish you a greater blessing! For, see, first, the man whose heart is conquered by Divine Grace early is *made happy soon*. That is a blessed prayer in the Psalm, “O satisfy us *early* with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”

Very few people, if they understood it, would wish to postpone happiness. Young hearts generally ask to be happy *now*. To have sin forgiven is to be unloaded *now* of that which is the prime cause of sorrow. To receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith is to be clothed with peace *now*. To be reconciled to God is to have a spring of consolation within your soul

now. To know yourself to be God's child is to have the greatest joy out of Heaven and to have it *now*. Who would wish to postpone it? Young Christians may die, but it is of small consequence if they do, for being early in Christ, they will be early in Heaven! Who would not wish to be safe as soon as possible? Who desires to tarry in the land of peril, where a point of time, a moment's space, may shut you up in Hell?

To be early secured from the wrath to come—early endued with a sense of security in Jesus Christ—why, surely it does not need many words to prove that this is good! Besides, while early piety brings early happiness, let it never be forgotten that *it saves from a thousand snares*. There are things which a man knows, who has lived long in sin, which he wishes he could forget! God's Grace rinses your mouth after you have been eating the forbidden fruit, but the flavor is very apt to linger and to return. Songs which are libels upon God and upon decency, once heard, will attack you in the middle of a prayer and words which, if you could forget them, you might be willing to lose your memory for that purpose, will invade your most hallowed seasons.

It is a great mercy that if a man is 70 or 80 years of age, yet if he shall believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be saved! Eleventh hour mercies are very sweet. But what a double privilege it is to be set to work in the vineyard while yet the dew is on the leaves and so to be kept from the idleness and the wickedness of the market place in which others loiter so long! It is good for a man to bear Christ's yoke in his youth because *it saves him from having those shoulders galled with the devil's yoke*. It preserves him from the fetters of that pitiful slavery into which so many are brought by habits long acquired and deeply seated. Sins long indulged grow to the shoulders—and to remove them is like tearing away one's flesh. Be thankful, young people, that the Savior is ready to receive you while you are yet young and that He gives you the promise, "They that seek Me early shall find Me."

Happy are they who entertain the Redeemer in the morning and so shut out the evil spirit all day long! There is this goodness about it, again, that *it gives you longer time in which to serve God*. If I were taken into the service of one whom I loved, I should like to do him a long day's work. If I knew that I could only work for him one day, I should strive to begin as soon as the gray light of dawn permitted me to see and I would continue at work far into the evening, cheerfully active, so long as a glimmer remained. If you are converted late in life you can only give to our Lord Jesus the shades of evening.

Blessed be His name, He will accept eventide service, but still, how much better to be able to serve the Lord from your youth up, to give Him those bright days while the birds are singing in the soul, when the sun is unclouded and the shadows are not falling! And then to give Him the long evening, when at eventide He makes it light and causes the infirmities of age to display His power and His fidelity. I think I know of no grander sight than that of a gray-haired man who has served the Lord Jesus from his youth up! There is this goodness about it yet further, that *it enables*

one to be well established in Divine things. “They that are planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

A tree transplanted takes a certain time to root, but when it becomes well established it produces abundant fruit. There must be time for striking root in Divine things. Everything in the kingdom of Grace is not to be learned in 10 minutes. I bless God that a man who has believed in Jesus only one second is a saved man—but he is not an *instructed* man—he is not an established man. He is not trained for battle nor tutored for labor. These things take time. When we are converted, we go to Christ’s School. We sit at His feet and learn of Him.

Now, who is the best scholar? All other things being equal, I should expect to find the best scholars in school to be those who come early. Eleven o’clock scholars do not learn much. Evening scholars, with a good master and great diligence, may pick up *something*, but scarcely so much as those who have been at the school all day! Oh, how blessed it is to begin to know Christ very early because then you can go on comprehending with all the saints the heights and depths of that which surpasses knowledge! No fear that you will ever exhaust this knowledge. It is so infinitely great and blessed that if we lived 7,000 years in the world, there would still be more to know of Christ and we should still have to say, “Oh, the depths.”

We need not be afraid, therefore, if we are converted when we are 10, or 15, or 20 years of age, we shall live to wear out the freshness of religion. Ah, no, we shall love it more and understand it better and, by God’s Grace, practice it more fully as the years roll over us! Therefore it is good to begin soon. And then, let me say, *it gives such confidence in later life to have given your heart to Jesus young.* I am glad to see some boys and girls here tonight. Now, my dear Children, God may spare you to become old men and old women and when your hair is gray and you are getting feeble and you know that you will soon die, it will be very delightful to be able to say, “O Lord, I have known You from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.”

There will be much force in the plea, for if we have a faithful servant, we do not cast him off when he grows old. “Ah,” you say, “he cannot do much, now. The old man is getting very feeble. He cannot see or hear as he used to do and he is slow in his movements. But then, you see, the good old fellow has been in our family ever since he was a boy and you do not think we are going to turn him out now?” No, the Lord will not cast off His old servants. He will not say to them “I have had the best of you. I have had your young days and I have had your middle life. But now you may go begging and take care of yourself.” No, that is how the Amalekite or the Ishmaelite might talk, but the God of Israel never forsakes His people! He says, “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made you; and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.”

O, you who have given yourselves to Jesus through His rich and Sovereign Grace while you are young, I know you feel it a sweet plea to urge

with God—"Now, Lord, forsake me not." So, then, young people, if you would lay by a precious treasure of consolation when those that look out of the windows are darkened. If you would have strength for the time of weakness. If you would have comfort for the day when the mourners go about the streets. If, above all, you would be supported when you are going Home, yield yourselves to Jesus now! Oh, that this very night you may bow your shoulders to the easy yoke of the meek and lowly Savior! So shall you find rest unto your souls.

II. I shall now give another meaning of the text. May the Holy Spirit bless it. Secondly, IT IS GOOD FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS THAT THEY BEAR THE YOKE OF JESUS. What do we mean by that? A good number of you have been lately converted, and to you I speak most earnestly. It will be for your good as long as you live, to render to Jesus complete obedience at the very first. Some Christians, seem to me, to start to Canaan all in a muddle. They do not begin their pilgrimage in the right pilgrim fashion. Every young Christian, when he is converted, should take time to consider, and should say to himself, "What am I to do? What is the *duty* of a Christian?"

He should also devoutly say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, show me what You would have me to do," and wait upon the Holy Spirit for guidance. Two young lads were not long ago converted to God—one of them attended here, the other at another place of worship. They talked to each other about what was the right way of confessing Jesus Christ. They did not quite know, but they meant to find out. They borrowed the keys of a neighboring Independent Chapel and went inside and spent some hours, day after day, reading together the New Testament and turning to every passage which refers to Baptism. The result was that they, both of them, came and were baptized in this place.

I wish that all Christians, in commencing, would look at that ordinance and at every *other* point in dispute and see what is God's mind about it. Search the Scriptures and see for yourselves. Do not say, "I have always been with the Episcopalians and, therefore, I ought to do as they do." Or, "I have always been with the Baptists," or "with the Wesleyans." My dear Friends, these people cannot make rules for us! Here is our guide—this Bible! If I want to go by the railway, I use Bradshaw, and do not trust to hearsay. And if I want to go to Heaven I must follow the Bible.

There is another book which people will ask you to attend to. Well, we will say nothing against that book, only it is not *the* book. *The* book is this volume, the blessed Bible! You should begin by feeling, "My Lord has saved me. I am His servant and I mean, at once, to take His yoke upon me. I will, as far as ever I can, do what He would have me do. There are some sins into which I shall most likely fall. Watch as I may, I shall sometimes make a slip, but here are some things which I can be right about and I will take care that I am right about them."

Now, if you young people begin conscientiously studying the Word of God and desiring, in everything, to put your feet down where Christ put His feet, I am sure it will be good for you. You will grow up to be healthy Christians and men and women of no ordinary stature. But if you do not

begin with searching the Word and take your religion second-hand from other people and do what you see other people do, without searching, why, you will lack that noble independence of mind and courage of spirit and, at the same time, that complete submission to Christ which make up the main elements of a noble-minded Christian!

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth, in the next place, namely, *by attaining clear instruction in Divine Truth*. We ought to go to the Lord Jesus Christ to learn of Him, not merely about ordinances and actions, but about what to think and what to believe. Oh, how I wish that every one of us had begun, with regard to our doctrinal sentiments, by presenting our minds to Christ like a sheet of clean paper for His Holy Spirit to write the Truth of God on! Alas, we begin with many a line upon us written by the pen of prejudice! Dear Friend, if you are converted to God, you are now to sit at the feet of *Jesus* to learn everything from *Him*—not to take *your* views to Him! Those are common expressions, “my views,” and, “my opinions,” and, “I am of such a persuasion.” Beloved, be persuaded by Christ, for *that* is the only persuasion worth following.

Take your views from Him—no other views of eternal and heavenly things are worth having. “Oh,” says one, “but then they might not happen to be your views.” Just so and I do not ask you to take my views! On the other hand I charge you before God never to believe anything because *I* say it, but to listen only to my Master and yield your faith only to the Infallible Word of God. We urge this upon you, because, even if you believe the Truth of God because we say it, you have not believed it in the right way. Truth is to be received because it is *true* and because Jesus Christ’s authority *proves* it *to you* to be true, not because any poor mortal who happens to preach is supposed to possess authority to decide such questions. We have no authority to assert anything to be the Truth of God upon our own *ipse dixit*. We are simply the trumpets at the lips of Christ when we speak with power. And sometimes, alas, we blow our *own* trumpets instead of leaving Jesus Christ to blow through us—and then we are worse than useless. I charge you bear the yoke in your youth by studying hard to know what is the way, the truth, and the life from the lips of Jesus Christ, Himself, being taught of the Spirit of God! It is good for you to do this.

It is also good for young converts to bear the yoke by beginning to serve Jesus Christ early. I like to see mothers, when they brings their little ones to the House of God, put a penny into its hand and teach it early to contribute to the cause of Christ. And when people are converted, there is nothing like their having something to do very soon. Not that they are to attempt to do the major things which belong to the more advanced and instructed, for, concerning some of these, we should apply the rule, “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he falls into the condemnation of the devil.”

But there is work for every Believer to do in Christ’s vineyard! There is work for children, there is work for young men, work for young women and it is good to begin early. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was so pleased with the widow’s mite, is very pleased with a child’s love to Him. We big

people are very apt to think, "What can a little girl do for Jesus?" Oh, but if that little girl does not do *something* for Jesus, now that she is saved, she will very likely grow up to be an idle Christian and not serve God in later years as she should.

I like to see the little trees which they put into our gardens, you know, the little pyramids and other dwarf trees. I like to see them, even from the first, bear just a little fruit. I think, sometimes, that pears, when there are only one or two on the tree, are far finer in flavor than those on the big tree which too often have lost in *quality* what they have gained in quantity. That which is done for Jesus Christ by young Christians, by weak Christians, by timid Christians, often has a very delicate flavor about it, precious to the taste of Jesus. It is good to begin serving Him in our youth.

"Ah," says one, "I shall begin when I can preach." Will you? You had better begin reciting a letter to that young friend with whom you went to school. You had better begin by dropping a tract in an area, or by trying to speak to some young person of your own age. Pride will prompt you to wish to be great, but love to Jesus will teach you that the small things are acceptable with Him. It is good for young men—good for young women—that as soon as they are converted to God they should bear the yoke of service.

It is also good, when we begin to serve God, that we should bear the yoke in another sense, namely, *by finding difficulties*. If it were in my power to make the way of serving Christ very easy to every young Christian here, I would not do it. If it were possible to make all Sunday school work pleasant, I would not do it. If it were possible to make standing up in the open air to preach a very easy thing, I would not make it so! It is good for you that you bear the yoke. It is good that your service should involve self-denial and try your patience. It is good for you that the girls should not be very orderly and that the boys should not be very teachable when you get them in the class.

It is good for you that the crowd should not stand still and listen very meekly to you and that infidels should put ugly questions to you when you are preaching in the street. It is good, I know, for the young minister to encounter curious Church members and even to meet with an adversary who means to overthrow him! It is a good thing, for a true worker, for the devil to labor to put him down because if God has put him up, he cannot be put down, but the attempt to overthrow him will do him good, develop his spiritual muscles and bring out the powers of his mind!

A very easy path would not be profitable to us. Consider David, after Samuel had put the oil on his head and anointed him to be the future king of Judah—it would have been a very bad thing for him to have waited in inglorious ease and slumbered away the interval. But take David and send him into the wilderness to keep the sheep. Bring him to Saul's court and let Saul throw a javelin at him—send him to fight with Goliath! Banish him, afterwards, to the tracks of the wild goats and compel him to live in the dens and caves and make him fight for his life—and by this process you will educate a hero, fit to rule Israel!

He comes to the throne no longer a youth and ruddy, but a man of war from his youth up, and he is, therefore, ready to smite the Philistines or the children of Ammon as the champion of the Lord of Hosts! It is good, then, to bear the yoke in the sense of undertaking service for Jesus and finding difficulty in it. And *it is good*, yet further, *to meet with persecution in your youth*. If it were possible to take every young Christian and put him into a pious family and not let him go into the world at all, but always keep him in his mother's lap—if it were possible to take every working man and guarantee that he should only work in a shop where they sing Psalms from morning to night, where nobody ever swears, where nobody ever utters a word of chaff against him—why, I say, if it were possible to do this, I do not know that it would be wise to do it!

To keep people out of temptation is exceedingly proper and none of us have any right to put a temptation in another's way. But it is good for us to be tempted, sometimes, otherwise we should not know the real condition of our hearts and might be rotting with inward pride while blooming with outward morality. Temptation lets us know how weak we are and drives us to our knees. It tests our faith and tries our love—and lets us see whether our Graces are genuine or not. When religion puts on her silver slippers and walks out with her golden earrings, everybody is quite content to go with her. But the honest, hearty Christian will follow Jesus Christ's truth when she goes barefoot through the mire and through the slough—and when her garments are bespattered by unholy hands.

Herein is the trial of the true and the unmasking of the deceitful. It would not be good for us to be kept from persecution, slander and trial—it is good for a man that he bear this yoke in his youth. A Christian is a hardy plant. Many years ago a pine tree was brought to England. The gentleman who brought it, put it in his hothouse, but it did not develop in a healthy manner. It was a spindly thing and, therefore, the gardener, feeling that he could not make anything of it, took it out and threw it upon the dunghill. There it grew into a splendid tree, for it had found a temperature suitable to its nature.

The tree was meant to grow near the snow. It loves cold winds and rough weather—and they had been sweating it to death in a hothouse. So it is with true Christianity. It seldom flourishes so well in the midst of ease and luxury as it does in great tribulation. Christians are often all the stronger and better because they happen to be cast where they have no Christian companions or kindly encouragements. As liberty usually favors the hardy mountaineers whose rugged hills have made them brave and hardy, so does abounding Grace, as a rule, visit those who endure the great fight and through much tribulation inherit the kingdom.

Once more, I believe it is good for young Christians *to experience much soul-trouble*. My early days of thoughtfulness were days of bitterness. Before I found a Savior, I was plowed with the great subsoil plow of terrible convictions. Month after month I sought, but found no hope. I learned the plague of my heart, the desperate evil of my nature and at this moment I have reason to thank God for that long wintry season. I am sure it was good for my soul. As a general rule there is a period of darkness some-

where or other in the Christian life—if you do not have it, at first, it is probable you will not endure it *then*—but if you do not have it at first it is just as likely you will pass through the cloud at some other time.

It is well to have it over with. It is good for a man, that he bears the yoke in his youth. Some friends seem to have found a patent way of going to Heaven. If their way is the right one, I am sure I am very much delighted, but I am rather dubious, for I meet with those who have tried the high-level railroad and are greatly discouraged because the train does not run so smoothly as they expected. They have been living a whole fortnight—well, not *quite* without sin—but very near it. They have triumphed and conquered altogether, and gone up in a balloon for a fortnight. Of course they have to come down again—and some come with an awful fall!

The best of them come, and say, “Dear Pastor, I am afraid I am not a child of God. I feel so wretched and yet I feel so happy and holy. I have said, “Yes, you see you went up and so you had to come down. If you had *kept* down you would not have had to come down.” That going up in a balloon to the stars frightens me about some young people. I wish they would continue humbly to feel that they are *nothing* and nobody and that Christ is *everything*. It is much better, on the whole, that a man should be timid and trembling than that he should, early in life, become very confident. “Blessed is the man that fears always” is a Scriptural text—not the slavish fear, nor yet a fear that doubts God, but still a fear.

There is a difference between doubting God and doubting yourself. You may have as much as you like of the last till you even get to self-despair, but there is no reason whatever why you should doubt the Lord! “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,” to be made to feel the weight of sin and the chastening hand of God—and to be left to cry out in the dark and say, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat.” These ordeals are of essential service to the newborn Believer and prepare him, alike, for the joys and the sorrows of his spiritual career.

III. I am going to finish with this last head. Practically, Brothers and Sisters, WE ARE, ALL OF US, IN OUR YOUTH. I see some gray heads and bald heads here and, yet they belong to persons in their minority. My dear Brother, though you are 70 and more, yet you have not come of age in the heavenly kingdom, for if you were of age you would have your estates. None of us will come of age till we enter Heaven. We are still under tutors and governors because we are, even now, as little children. We have not come to that period in which we are fit for all the joys of Heaven, for if we were, we should be taken Home to our Father’s house to enjoy our inheritance at once. We are still in our youth.

Well, it is good for us, at this present time, that we should bear the yoke and continue to bear it. It is good, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that we, who have gone some distance on the road to Heaven, should still have something to bear, because it enables us to still honor Christ! If we do not *suffer* with Him, how can we have fellowship with Him? If we have no crosses to carry, how can we commune with our Lord, the chief Cross-Bearer? Let us be glad that we are not spared tribulation, that we are not

screened from affliction, but are permitted to glorify God by patience, by resignation and by unstaggering faith.

Do not ask the Lord that you may have no trouble, but rather remember you have only a little while in which you can be patient—only a little while in which you can be a cross-bearer and, therefore, it behooves you to use each moment well. A few more revolving suns and you will be where there is no more cross to carry, no sorrow to bear and, therefore, where there is no room for patience and no opportunity of being acquiescent in the Divine will. Be content to bear the yoke now, for it is but a little while and this *honor* will be no longer yours. It is good for us all to bear the yoke, too, because thus *old Adam is kept in check*. A wonderfully vivacious thing is that old Adam. He has been reported dead a good many times, but to my certain knowledge he is still very brisk!

When we are in trouble, proud old Adam often seems to be quiet and does not so well succeed in keeping us from prayer and, consequently, in time of trouble, we often enjoy our very sweetest seasons of devotion. By the Lord's goodness we escape the trial, but, alas, old Adam soon lifts up his proud head again! He says, "Ah, you are a favorite of Heaven. Your mountain stands firm. Your affliction has been sanctified to you and you have grown in Grace very wonderfully. The fact is, you are a very fine fellow."

Yes, that is old Adam's way, and whenever he sees an opportunity, he will return to his old game of flattery. Whenever you are tempted to bargain, say to yourself, "I know you, old Adam. I know you and will not yield to your crafty devices." What happens when we become self-satisfied? Why, the yoke returns upon our shoulders heavier! We fall into another trouble and then old Adam is up in the stirrups, again, and begins to grumble and rebel. The flesh begins proudly to despair, whereas a little while before it was boasting! Trials, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, are a great help to overcome corruptions. It is a very hard matter for a man to be rich and prospering in this world, to be at ease and have a long stretch of health—to have everything exactly as he likes—and yet to be a Christian!

When the road is very smooth, many fall, but when the way is rough there is good grip for the feet and we are not so likely to stumble. When trials come, they whip us home to our heavenly Father! Sheep do not stray so much when the black dog is after them—his barks make them run to the shepherd! *Affliction* is the black dog of the Good Shepherd to fetch us back to Him, otherwise we should wander to our ruin! We are not better than David and we may honestly confess as he did, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." Therefore it is good for us, spiritually, young people, even though old as to the flesh, that we should bear the yoke while we are still in our youth.

Besides, dear Friends, it makes you *so helpful to others* to have known affliction. I do not see how we can sympathize if we are never tried, ourselves. I know a beloved Brother who is, perhaps, 50 years of age, who never had a day's sickness, and he told me he scarcely knew what physical pain was except when a heavy person trod on his toes! Well, now, he is

a good Brother—but when he tries to sympathize with another it is like an elephant picking up a pin, or Hercules with a cane—he does do it, by God's Grace, but it is a thing to be wondered at. If you tell him that you feel very low in spirits, he looks at you and tries to say very kind things, but he does not understand your despondency.

Now, it would be a great pity for a Christian minister to be lacking in the power to sympathize, would it not? Oh, thank God for troubles, because they make the heart tender and they teach the lips the art of consolation! You can be a Boanerges without trouble, but you never can be a Barnabas! You may be a son of thunder, but you will never be a son of consolation. As we wish to serve others, let us thank God that He qualifies us to do so by making us bear the yoke in our youth.

Once more, is it not good to bear the yoke while we are here, because *it will make Heaven all the sweeter*? Oh, how sweet Heaven will be to that bedridden woman who has lain, these 20 years, upon her weary couch and scarcely had a night's unbroken rest! What rest Heaven will be to her! I know a good man within two miles of this place who has laid 18 years without moving. I do not know a happier man than he is! It is a treat to see him, but still, what a change it will be—from that bed from which he cannot rise—to stand on the sea of glass and forever wave the palm branch and draw forth music from the celestial harp! What a transformation!

How great the change for a poor Christian woman dying in a workhouse, to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom! What a change for the martyr standing at the stake, burning slowly to death, and then rising to behold the Glory of his Lord! What a change for you, dear old Friend, with all those aches and pains about you, which make you feel uneasy even while you are sitting here! Ah, Graybeard, you will be young soon! There will be no wrinkles on your brow! You will not require those spectacles! You will not need that staff to lean upon—you will be as strong as the youngest here!

As you stand before the Throne of God, you will scarcely know yourself to be the same old woman you used to be, or the same sickly man you were a little while ago. You will be stripped of the house of clay and your young soul will leap up from the old body and be present with the Lord! And then the grave will be a refining pot in which the dross of the flesh will be consumed and, by-and-by, your body will rise, no longer old and haggard and worn, but full of beauty, like your Master's glorious body!

This should give joy to you at all times—it must be good for you to bear the yoke, seeing Heaven will, by that means, be made more fully Heaven to you when once you reach its everlasting rest—

***“The way may be rough but it cannot be long
So let's smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Lamentations 5.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—750, 748.**

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SOLITUDE, SILENCE, SUBMISSION

NO. 2468

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 7, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 13, 1886.**

*“He sits alone and keeps silent, because He has borne it upon him.
He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.”
Lamentations 3:28, 29.*

THUS the Prophet describes the conduct of a person in deep anguish of heart. When he does not know what to do, his soul, as if by instinct, humbles itself. He gets into some secret place, he utters no speech, he gives himself over to moaning and to tears, and then he bows himself lower and yet lower before the Divine Majesty, as if he felt that the only hope for him in the extremity of his sorrow was to make complete submission to God and to lie in the very dust before Him.

It seems to me that such conduct as this, which is characteristic of every truly gracious man in his hour of trouble, should also be the mark of all who are seeking God's Grace—those who are not yet saved, but who are conscious of their need of salvation. I must, surely, be speaking right into the heart of some who are feeling the crushing weight and heavy burden of their guilt. If you cannot do anything else, dear Friends, do what these two verses say, in order that, afterwards, you may be able to take that grand Gospel step of faith in Jesus Christ which will certainly bring you into peace and joy!

Those of you who have the Revised Version will notice a correction which has been made long ago by all competent scholars—“*Let him sit alone and keep silent, because He has laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.*” It does not matter which way you read the passage, because the conduct of one gracious man is virtually a precept to another, yet it is satisfactory to find that if we are under the burden of sin, we are here *commanded* to do as the Prophet did in his time of need.

My objective, just now, is to explain this line of conduct, in the hope that some who are in trouble will at once heartily follow it.

I. First, then, observe that in the time of great trouble, HOLY SOLITUDE is commended to us—“*Let him sit alone.*”

I earnestly advise you who are under concern of soul to seek to get alone and to be quiet and thoughtful in your solitude—not merely to be *alone*, but to sit by yourself like a person in the posture of thought. When a soul is under a deep sense of sin, the more it can be alone, the better. That sense of sin will be increased by the loneliness and when it becomes

intolerable, it is highly probable that in that loneliness the way of its removal will be discovered. In this age we all live too much in company—and in a great city like this, we are busy from morning to night, and we do not get the opportunities for quiet reflection which our forefathers were known to take. I am afraid, therefore, that our religion is likely to become very superficial and flimsy for the lack of solitary, earnest thought. Men, nowadays, usually go in flocks—someone leads the way and the rest follow him like sheep that rush through a gap in the hedge! It would be better for us if we deliberated more, if we used our own judgment, if we drew near to God in our own personality and were resolved that whatever others might do, we would seek to be personally guided by the Lord Himself.

I commend solitude to any of you who are seeking salvation, first, that you may *well study your case as in the sight of God*. Few men truly know themselves as they really are. Most people have seen themselves in a mirror, but there is another mirror which gives *true* reflections, into which few men look. To study one's own self in the light of God's Word and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins—and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures—would be a very healthy exercise. But how very few care to go through it! Yet, beloved Friends, if it is a wise thing to look well to your business, how much more ought you to look to the business which concerns your immortal souls!

If a true shepherd will not neglect his flocks and his herds, should not a wise man care about his thoughts, his feelings and his actions? Must it not be a wretched condition not to know whether one is saved or not? I sometimes hear people express surprise if they are asked whether they are saved—yet in what ignorance of your own soul's state must you be if you have never put that question to yourself, or if, when it is put, you feel inclined to give no answer to it! I press this matter home upon you and if you would be saved, you must first know that you are lost! If you would seek to be healed, you must first learn that you are sick! It is not possible that you will repent unless you are aware of your sin. It is not likely that you will look to Christ unless you first know *what* it is for which you are to look to Him!

Therefore, I pray you, set apart some time *every day*, or at least some time as often as you can get it, in which the business of your mind shall be to take your longitude and latitude, that you may know exactly where you are. You may be drifting towards the rocks and you may be wrecked before you know your danger. I implore you, do not let your ship go at full steam through a fog, but slacken speed a bit and heave the lead to see whether you are in deep waters or shallow. I am not asking you to do more than any kind and wise man would advise you to do. Do I even ask you more than your own conscience tells you is right? Sit alone a while, that you may carefully consider your case.

Get alone, again, dear Friend—especially dear *young* Friend—that you may *diligently search the Scriptures*. I am often astounded at the igno-

rance there still is of what is written in God's Word! Many persons who have even been in Sunday schools for years seem to be totally unaware of the most plain Truths of the Gospel of God's Grace! How can we know what is revealed unless we read and study it for ourselves? Alas, the dust upon many men's Bibles will condemn them! God has been pleased, in this Book, to give us the revelation of the way of salvation and we ought to rush to the Book with eager anxiety to know what God has said in it! But instead of doing so, though we can get a Bible for sixpence and, perhaps, have a copy in every room in our house, how little do we read it! If you truly desire to be saved, get alone for the earnest and hearty study of the Word of God!

How often you may meet with persons who profess to be infidels, yet if you press them closely enough, you will find that they have never even read the New Testament through! There are many more who are in doubt and anxiety, yet they have never gone to see what are the promises of God and what the Lord is ready to do for them that seek Him. I beseech you, as sensible and reasonable beings, do not let God speak to you and refuse to hear! You need to be saved from sin! In this Book God has revealed the way of salvation, therefore do not shut up the Book, fasten the clasps and leave it neglected. Oh, Book of books, the map of the way to Glory! That man invokes a terrible curse upon his own head who refuses to study you! He does, in effect, shut the gate of Heaven against himself and bar the road to everlasting bliss! If you would be saved, dear Friend, sit alone, consider your case and then study God's thoughts concerning it.

Get alone, further, that you may *commune with your God*. After we have once learned the way, we can commune with God *anywhere*—amidst the roar and turmoil of the crowded city, or on the top of the mast of a ship—but, to begin with, it is best to be alone with the Lord. My dear Hearer, have you ever spoken to God in all your life? Have you ever realized that there is such a King in the room with you? There is such a King! It is He who made you and who has preserved you up to this good hour! You are, surely, not prepared to deny His existence? And if you are not, I beseech you, do not ignore that existence and live as if there were no God! Oh, speak with Him at once! Perhaps five minutes' earnest speech with Him may be the turning point of your life. "I will arise and go to my father," was the turning point with the prodigal—and it may be the same with you.

"Oh, but I feel so guilty!" Then get alone and say that to the Lord! "But I do not feel as I ought." Then get alone and tell that to God. "Oh, but I—I am such an unbelieving being!" Get alone and tell out all the truth to the Lord—do not entertain a thought or a feeling which you dare not tell Him. Do not *imagine* that you can hide anything from Him, for He reads your inmost heart. Then take that heart and lay it bare before Him and say with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." As one of God's creatures, I could not

bear to think that I had seen the glory of the midnight stars, or warmed myself in the brightness of the noonday sun and yet had never spoken to Him who made them all and myself as well! One of our sweetest joys on earth is to speak with Him in prayer and praise, to call Him, Friend, and to be on terms of sweet familiarity with the Most High. I do pray you, then, get alone for these three purposes, first, to consider your case. Next, to study the Scriptures concerning your case And then that you may speak with God in prayer.

Get alone, also, for one more reason, and that is that you may avoid *distraction*. I think that, on the Lord's Day, when people go home, after service, they sometimes make a mistake in talking with those who do not feel as they feel. If the arrows of God have entered your heart, go home *alone*. If there has been *anything* in the sermon which has been for your comfort as a Christian, go home *alone*. If there was anything in the sermon which has been for your warning as a sinner, go home *alone*. How often may even godly and gracious people talk upon some theme that may rob their fellow-Believers of all the good they have received in God's House and, as for unconverted persons, I am sure that if they ever feel impressed under the Word, it will be their utmost wisdom to take care of that first impression—and not let it be driven away by foolish or frivolous conversation.

Some of us are old enough to remember the day before there were matches of the kind we now use. And early on a frosty morning some of us have tried to strike a light with flint and steel, and the old-fashioned tinderbox. How long we struck, and struck, and watched, and waited and, at last, there was a little spark in the tinder! And then we would hold the box up and blow on it very softly, that we might keep that little spark alight till we had kindled the fire that we needed. That tenderness over the first spark is what I invite everyone to practice in spiritual matters! If you would be saved—if there is anything like feeling in your heart, if there is any good desire in your soul, do not begin to talk as soon as you get out of the Tabernacle—that would be like placing the lid on the tinder and putting the spark out! But get alone, blow on that spark, for perhaps it may come to a flame and you may find salvation! I advise all persons under sorrow of soul, somehow or other to break right away from their companions! When the day's work is done, let them, each one, say to themselves, "I am not going out with that frivolous person, nor shall I sit in the house with those who will be talking of trifling matters. I have a soul that needs salvation and I must have my soul saved *now*. I cannot afford to be in this giddy company."

"Let him sit alone." That is good advice which the Prophet gives in the text—and I desire to press it upon every awakened person who desires to find the Savior!

II. The text goes on to say, in the next place, that we should practice **SUBMISSIVE SILENCE**—"Let him sit alone and keep silent."

In what respects should seeking souls keep silent? I answer, first, if the burden of sin is pressing upon you, be sure to abstain from all idle

talk, for if the idle talk of others, as I have reminded you, can distract your thoughts, how much more would your own! It ill becomes a man, who is on the brink of Hell, to be laughing and jesting! When God is angry with you, can you make mirth? I can understand how you can be merry when once you have come back to the great Father's House and the fatted calf is killed and your Father rejoices over you. But while you are still covered with your sins and are not yet sure of God's forgiveness, sit silent! It is the best thing you can do—quietness becomes you. Lay your finger on your lips till you have something better to speak of than you have as yet. Keep silent, then, from all idle talk.

Keep silent, also, in another respect. Do not attempt to make any *excuse for your sin*. Oh, how ready sinners are with their excuses! A man says, "But, Sir, I have a besetting sin." Do you not think that a great many people make a mistake about besetting sins? There was a man who used to get drunk and he said that it was his besetting sin. But his brother said, "No, Sam, it is your *upsetting sin!*" And so it was. If I were to go, tonight, across Clapham Common and half-a-dozen men were to surround me and rob me of my wallet, then I should be beset. But if I were to *know* that there were thieves there, and yet I walked across the common on purpose to meet with them, you could not say that they had beset me—you would say that I was a fool to walk into their hands! The besetting sin is that which a man fights against and wars against with all his soul, yet is overcome by it. Do not lay any stress upon that, as though your being beset by sin was any excuse to you, especially if you go into the ways of sin.

You go and sit with those who drink and then wonder that you get drunk? You go and associate with those who swear or sing lewd songs and then you wonder that, the next time you try to pray, a nasty verse of a bad song comes up? It is your own fault if you go and willfully mingle with sinners! How can you be a child of God? No, when you know that anything is a sin, stay away from the temptation! He that does not want to get wet should not go out into the rain. Instead of your excuse making your case any better, it makes it worse! Therefore, keep silent before your God.

And next, keep silent from all *complaining of God*. No man is truly saved while he sets himself up as the judge of God, yet this is the practice of many men. If you give them the Word of God, they begin to pull it to pieces! They ask, "Is God so severe that He will mark our faults? Does He take notice, even, of our evil *thoughts*? Can it really be true that for every idle *word* that a man shall speak, he will have to give an account in the Day of Judgment?" And then, after judging God to be too strict and harsh in His dealings with poor fallible flesh and blood, they go on to snatch from His hand the balance and the rod and sit upon their little throne—and dare to question the decrees of the great Judge of All! "It would be wrong," they say, "to cast men into Hell and to punish with eternal wrath the sins of a short life!" And then they begin to traverse all the teaching of Scripture and to quibble with this and object to that! O

Sirs, if you would be saved, you must give up this wickedness! This kind of conduct will damn you as surely as you live!

When prisoners are tried by an earthly judge and are condemned to die, if they are permitted to speak, they can have no hope of obtaining mercy by criticizing the judge and questioning the law! Of course they are not guilty, poor innocents! "It is the harsh law," they say, "that is to blame." But the law must maintain its majesty against such quibblers and it cannot stoop to mercy, or sheath its sword while a man is in that humor! So, Sinner, sit alone and keep silent. Presume not to judge your God! Behold, He comes with clouds! The trumpet will soon proclaim His appearing and they who were so free to judge their Maker will cry in another tone when that great day has, at last, come! With the earth reeling beneath their feet and the heavens, themselves, on fire, they will beg the rocks to fall on them and the hills to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne—and from the wrath of the Lamb! Go, you guilty one! Sit still and hold your tongue—and bring your rebellious heart to submission! Shall the flax contend with the fire, or the stubble fight with the flame? What can you do in warring with your Maker?

Sit alone and keep silent, next, from all *claims of merit*. I know that the tendency of the human heart is to say, "I am no worse than other people. I am a good Chapel-going, Church-going, Psalm-singing person! I give to the poor, I say my prayers and attend to all that sort of thing." You will never obtain mercy while you have a word of that kind to plead! Until you are like a vessel turned upside down and drained of every drop of human merit, there is no hope of salvation for you! You must sit alone and keep silent about those good works of yours, for they are all a lie and you know it. You have never done a good work in your *life*—you have either spoiled it by your selfish motives *before* it, or by some carelessness *in* it, or by some vainglorious pride *after* it. At the best, you are nothing but a boasting Pharisee, and though you may wash the outside of your cup and platter, yet your heart is full of wickedness and your soul is steeped in sin. O man, talk no more so exceeding proudly, but sit still and hold your tongue about merit and what you think you deserve before the holy God! There is no way of mercy for any of us until we shut our mouths and utter not a single boastful word, but stand guiltily silent before the Lord.

I think it is well, too, when a poor sin-burdened soul is silent before God and unable to make any *bold speeches*. I recollect that when I was first seeking the Lord, I heard some good people talking about their confidence in God. I had to hold my tongue, for I could not say a word about *that* matter. I heard a young friend say that he had found Christ, but I had to hold my tongue, for I knew that *I had not* found Him. And even after I *had* found Him, there were times when I dared not say so. I felt in my spirit the question, "Am I self-deceived, or am I not? And if I have spoken pretty boldly since that time, even now, occasionally, I feel that same silence creeping over me. It would have been well if Peter had been silent when he said to his Lord, "Although all shall be offended, yet will

not I.” I like a man who knows not only how to speak, but how to sit still—but that sitting still part is hard work to many.

There came a young man to Demosthenes to learn oratory. He talked away at a great rate and Demosthenes said, “I must charge you double fees.” “Why?” he asked. “Why,” said the master, “I have *first* to teach you to hold your tongue and afterwards to instruct you how to speak.” The Lord teaches true penitents how to hold their tongues. They open not their mouth when He has laid trouble upon them. And even in the company of good people they are sometimes dumb with silence and hold their tongue even from good. It is not an ill thing that they should act thus, for often the will of the Lord is not done with words and, sometimes, that silence which is frost of the mouth is thaw of the soul. And the heart flows best before God when even *praise* sits silent on our tongues. O Beloved, in your hour of darkness because of your sin, sit still and hold your tongue, for it is oftentimes the way of peace to the soul!

III. Now I shall ask your special and patient attention for just a few minutes to the third point, which is, PROFOUND HUMILIATION—“Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope.” Upon this matter I would earnestly address those who are not yet saved, but who desire to be.

Dear Friends, it often happens that men do not obtain peace with God because they have not come low enough. The gate of Heaven, though it is so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, is, nevertheless, so low that pride can never pass through it. You must stoop if you would enter Heaven! “Let him put his mouth in the dust.” I believe that this precept is needed by very many and that, when they obey it, they will get peace, but never till then. “Let him put his mouth in the dust.” Oriental monarchs require very lowly reverence from their subjects—it is not in keeping with *our* manners and customs—but the similitude holds good in our relation to the Lord God. When we come before Him, we must prostrate ourselves till we bow our mouths in the dust. What can this expression mean? “Let him put his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope.”

It means, first, that there must be *true, humble, lowly confession of sin*. You say that you have been praying, yet you have not found peace? Have you confessed your sins? This is absolutely necessary! Confess your sins to *me*, you ask? No, thank you. I do not want to hear your confession. It would do me much harm and it could do you no good to tell them to *me*. It is to God alone that this confession should be made. Some men have never really made a confession of their sin to God at all—they have done it in such general and insincere terms that it did not amount to a confession. Go enter your chamber, shut the door and get alone. And there, with words or without words, as you find it best, acknowledge before God your omissions and commissions—what you have done and what you have not done. Pour out the whole story before God and cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Do not cloak or dissemble before the Almighty! Let all your sins appear. Take a lowly place—not simply be a sinner in *name*—but confess that you are a sinner in fact

and deed. I believe that some of you are in darkness much longer than you need to be because you do not stoop to a humble confession of your sin. Let the lances into this ugly gathering of yours that brings you so much inflammation of mind and pain of spirit! Let your confession flow like water before God! Pour out your heart before Him! Acknowledge your sins, take the place of a sinner, for this is a great way towards finding salvation—"If so there may be hope."

Further than that, dear Friends, when it is said that we are to put our mouths in the dust, it means that we are to give up the habit of *putting ourselves above other people* and finding fault with others. How often is the value of our penitence destroyed because we have looked at Mistress Somebody and said, "Well, I am guilty, but still—well, I am not such a hypocrite as Mrs. So-and-So." What have you to do with her? "Oh," says another, "I know I have been a bad man, but then I—I—I have never been as bad as old So-and-So." What have you to do with him? Here you are, pretending to be humble, yet you are as proud as Lucifer! I know you—you are like that man who went up to the Temple and pretended that he was going to pray. And then he said, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are" and so forth—"nor even as this publican"—turning his eyes in disdain towards the true penitent!

There is many a man who says, "I am a sinner, but then I am a total abstainer and wear the blue ribbon—that is a good thing, is it not?" Yes, it is, but not if you trust in *it* for salvation! "Oh, but," says another, "I know that I have not lived as I ought, but I have always paid 20s. in the pound." So ought every honest man, but what is there to be proud about in *that*? Are you going to get to Heaven by paying 20s. in the pound to a man and not a penny in the pound to God? Yet that is often the way of men! Or else, perhaps, we are accusing others while we pretend that we are, ourselves, humble. We must get rid of all such bad habits if we want the Lord to have mercy upon us! I believe a sincere penitent thinks himself to be the worst man there is and *never* judges other people, for he says in his heart, "That man may be more openly guilty than I am, but very likely he does not know as much as I do, or the circumstances of his case are an excuse for him." A woman, convinced of sin, says, "It is true, that woman has fallen and her life is full of foulness, but, perhaps, if I had been tempted as she was and had been deceived as she was, I would have been even worse than she is." Oh, that we might all give up that habit of judging other people and put our mouths in the dust in self-abasement before God!

I think that putting our mouths in the dust also means that we realize our *own nothingness in the Presence of God*. We have nothing to say, nothing to claim, nothing to boast of—if the Lord should never look upon us in mercy, yet we could not complain. If He were to banish us from His Presence forever, yet we could not open our mouths to accuse Him, but must say, "You are just when You judge. You are clear when You condemn." That, dear Friends, is putting your mouth in the dust—feeling that, in God's sight, you are only like the dust. If you have sought the

Lord and have not found him, I exhort you to sink yourself lower! Believe that you have no strength, that you have no righteousness, that you are truly lost and ruined and undone, that you are nothing but a mass of loathsomeness before the thrice-holy God and bow before Him with this conviction in your heart, “if so there may be hope.”

I am not going to preach upon the last part of the text because the time has almost gone and, also, for another reason—I have not to say to you, “*If so there may be hope.*” There *is* hope for any man, or woman, or child here—I like to say, “child,” as well as, “man, or woman,” because I believe that children are often the best part of my congregation! Last Monday week, we had five children before the Church, one after the other, whose testimony for Christ was quite as clear as that of any of the elders among us! What an important part of the congregation the boys and girls make up! I believe that there are almost as many saved among the little ones, now, in this congregation as there are of grown-up people, perhaps even more. Well now, if any of you who are guilty—whether old or young—come before the Lord, confess your sin and trust in Christ for mercy—you shall have mercy! I do not know who you are and I do not care who you are—but whoever shall come and confess his sin in all lowliness of heart, and in faith, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—he shall have mercy!

Christ sits on His Throne of Grace and stretches out the silver scepter. Bow before Him and He will forgive your sin! The fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness—if you are sinful and unclean, come to the fountain that Christ has opened and which the devil cannot close—and wash and be clean this very hour! God in infinite mercy is ready to forgive! His heart yearns over the wanderers. He stretches out His hands and entreats you to come back and He is grieved until you return! If there is in your heart any sorrow for having sinned against your God—if there is any anxiety to come back to Him, come back! If you do but turn your face towards Him, while you are yet a great way off, He sees! He will have compassion on you! He will run to you! He will embrace you! Fall into His arms right now! Believe in His Son! Trust yourself with Jesus, for He has never yet failed any who trusted Him. Make Him the Trustee of your soul, for He is a Trustee who can be trusted! Deposit in His hands your spirit, for He is able to keep that which you commit to Him against that day.

We are getting into summer and I feel very anxious that none of my hearers should have to say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved.” Then, before the harvest comes, now that the summer is just beginning, may the Lord incline your hearts to come and put your trust in Jesus! Many of you are from the country. You have come to see London. Of all the sights possible to you, the best will be, first, to see *yourselves*, and then to see your Savior! There is no exhibition like the exhibition of the love of God in Jesus Christ to guilty sinners! May this be the best day you have ever lived because it shall be the first day you have ever *truly* lived with the life of God in your soul! I pray

the Lord to bless my words to each of you without exception! Surely, there is not anybody here who would wish to be left out! God bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LAMENTATIONS 3:1-33; 55-58.**

We are about to read a chapter which is full of sorrow. While you are listening to it, some of you may be saying, "We are not in that condition." Well then, be thankful that you are not! And while you hear of the sorrows of others, bless God for the joys you, yourself, experience. At the same time, remember that there is a way of sorrow which leads, at last, to rest and peace. There is truth in the words of the poet Cowper—

***"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."***

If you have never known the sorrows of the weeping Prophet, or anything like them, I am not sure that you should congratulate yourselves, for there is a brokenness of heart that is worth more than the whole world! There is a crushed and bruised spirit in which the Lord delights and which is a token for good to the one who possesses it.

Verses 1, 2. *I am the man that has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.* Some of us recollect when we used to go into our room, shut the door and read such a chapter as this and say, "Here is a description of my true condition." We were once broken in pieces, torn asunder through a terrible sense of sin. Our thoughts were like a case of knives perpetually pricking us and, at such a time, these were our words as well as the words of Jeremiah, "He has led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light."

3, 4. *Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones.* Conviction of sin seems to dry up the very sap of our life till we become withered with age. Worse than the agony of a broken bone is the pain of a broken heart. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, believe me, it is no child's play. In the case of some of us, it was sore wounding.

5. *He has built against me—*"As if He deliberately built walls to stop up my way and erected castles from which to attack my soul, 'He has built against me.'"—

5. *And compassed me with gall and travail.* "He has shut me up in a circle of bitterness."

6, 7. *He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy.* Like a prisoner in his dungeon who has to wear manacles and fetters.

8. *Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.* That is the worst trial of all, for there is comfort in prayer. But when even *that* seems denied you, into what a terrible state of sorrow is your heart brought!

9-11. *He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone, He has made my paths crooked. He was to me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in se-*

cret places. He has turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. You who remember that experience, bless God that you have passed through it, that you have gone over that rough road into the place of peace and rest in Christ! You who have never known this path, it will be well for you when you do, difficult as you may find it.

12. *He has bent His bow and set me as a mark for the arrow.* “Every sermon I hear seems a shot at me, every text of Scripture seems an arrow aimed at me.”

13. *He has caused the arrow of His quiver to enter into my loins.* “They are not merely shot at me, but they have actually hit me; they have wounded me; they have pierced me in vital parts.”

14-17. *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He has covered me with ashes. And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.* “It seems so long ago since I was prosperous that I forget what it was like! I have been so troubled that I do not remember what it was to be at ease.”

18-21. *And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* Notice that in all his sorrow, this man still had hope! His soul was humbled and, therefore, he had hope. I think that in the New Zealand language, the word for hope is, “swimming thought”—the thought that swims when everything else is drowned! Oh, what a mercy it is that hope can live on when all things else appear to die!

22. *It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.* Hear that, troubled heart! You are not yet destroyed, you are still in the land of the living—as we say—“on praying ground and pleading terms with God.” “It is of Jehovah’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

23, 24. *They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him.* “With all my troubles, losses and griefs, I still have a God! Therefore will I hope in Him.”

25. *The LORD is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.* Even though it is out of the depths of the utmost distress that you seek God, you shall find Him to be good to you. He is hard to none, unkind to none. Only go and test Him and try Him—and you shall find that it is even as I say.

26, 27. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.* And it is not bad for him if he keeps on bearing it in his old age! Our shoulders always need the yoke. We are such uncertain creatures that we cannot bear too much freedom, even from sorrow!

28-31. *He sits alone and keeps silent, because He has borne it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope. He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever.* What music there is in that line! He may put you away for a while and seem to leave you, but, “the Lord will not cast off forever.” God may seem to put us away from Him, but it is written, “He hates putting away” “There is no divorce between Christ and the soul that is once espoused to Him! Their separation shall not be perpetual, for nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

32, 33. *But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.* Now notice, in the 55th verse, what came to the Prophet after all this sorrow—

55, 56. *I called upon Your name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. You have heard my voice: hide not Your ear at my breathing, at my cry.* Sometimes our prayers get to be so very weak that they are only a breathing. Yet we must never forget that “Prayer is the breath of God in men, returning from where it came.” And “Praying breath is never spent in vain.”

57, 58. *You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul.* What a comfort it is that Christ in Heaven is our great Advocate and that He has pleaded the causes of our soul before the Throne of God!

58. *You have redeemed my life.* He who is our Advocate is also our Redeemer and, therefore, we are doubly safe! Glory be to His name!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—492, 584, 556.

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

COMFORT FOR THOSE WHOSE PRAYERS ARE FEEBLE NO. 3083

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 1908.

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

“Hide not Your ear at my breathing.”
Lamentations 3:56.

YOUNG beginners in Grace are very apt to compare themselves with advanced disciples and so to become discouraged. And tried saints fall into the same habit. They see those of God's people who are upon the mountain, enjoying the light of their Redeemer's Countenance and, comparing their own condition with the joy of the saints, they write bitter things against themselves and conclude that surely, they are not the people of God! This course is as foolish as though the lambs should suspect themselves not to be of the flock because they are not sheep, or as though a sick man should doubt his existence because he is not able to walk or run as a man in good health. But since this evil habit is very common, it is our duty to seek after the dispirited and cast-down ones and comfort them. That is our errand in this short discourse. We hear the Master's words, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," and we will endeavor to obey them with His Spirit's help.

Upon the matter of prayer, many are dispirited because they cannot yet pray as advanced Believers do, or because, during some peculiar crisis of their spiritual history, their prayers do not appear to them to be so fervent and acceptable as is the case with other Christians. Perhaps God may have a message to some troubled ones in the present address and may the Holy Spirit apply it with power to them!

"Hide not Your ear at my breathing." This is an amazing description of prayer, is it not? Frequently, prayer is said to have a voice—it is so in this verse—"You have heard my voice." Prayer has a melodious voice in the ear of our Heavenly Father. Frequently prayer is expressed by a cry. It is so in this verse—"Hide not Your ear at my cry." A cry is the natural, plaintive utterance of sorrow and has as much power to move the heart of God as a babe's cry to touch a mother's tenderness. But there are times when we cannot speak with the voice, nor even cry. And then a prayer may be expressed by a moan, or a groan, or a tear—"the heaving of a sigh, the falling of a tear." But possibly we may not even get as far as that and may have to say, like one of old, "Like a crane or a swallow, so do I chatter." Our prayer, as heard by others, may be a kind of irrational utterance. We may feel as if we moaned like wounded beasts rather than prayed like intelligent men. And we may even fall below that, for in the text we have a kind of prayer which is less than a moan or a sigh. It is

called a *breathing*—“Hide not Your ear at my breathing.” The man is too far gone for a glance of the eye, or the moaning of the heart—he scarcely breathes, but that faint breath is prayer! Though unuttered and unexpressed by any sounds which could reach a human ear, yet God hears the breathing of His servant’s soul and hides not His ear from it.

We shall teach three or four lessons from the present use of the expression, “breathing.”

I. WHEN WE CANNOT PRAY AS WE WOULD, IT IS GOOD TO PRAY AS WE CAN.

Bodily weakness should never be urged by us as a reason for ceasing to pray. In fact, no living child of God will ever think of such a thing. If I cannot bend the knees of my body because I am so weak, my prayers from my bed shall be on *their* knees—my heart shall be on its knees and pray as acceptably as before. Instead of relaxing prayer because the body suffers, true hearts, at such times, usually double their petitions. Like Hezekiah, they turn their face to the wall that they may see no earthly object and then they look at the invisible things and talk with the Most High. Yes, and often in a sweeter and more familiar manner than they did in the days of their health and strength. If we are so faint that we can only lie still and breathe, let every breath be a prayer!

Nor should a true Christian relax his prayer through *mental difficulties*. I mean those perturbations which distract the mind and prevent the concentration of our thoughts. Such ills will happen to us. Some of us are often much depressed and are frequently so tossed to and fro in mind that if prayer were an operation which required the faculties to be all at their best, as in the working of abstruse mathematical problems, we could not, at such times, be able to pray at all. But, Brothers and Sisters, when the mind is very heavy, then is not the time to give up praying, but rather to redouble our supplications! Our blessed Lord and Master was driven by distress of mind into the most sad condition—He said, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death”—yet He did not, for that reason say, “I cannot pray” but, on the contrary, He sought the well-known shades of the olive grove and there unburdened His heavy heart and poured out His soul like water before the Lord! Never let us consider ourselves to be too ill or too distracted to pray. A Christian ought never to be in such a state of mind that he feels bound to say, “I do not feel that I could pray” or, if he does, let him pray till he feels he *can* pray. Not to pray because you do not feel fit to pray is like saying, “I will not take medicine because I am too ill.” Pray for prayer! Pray yourself, by the Spirit’s assistance, into a praying frame! It is good to strike when the iron is hot, but some make cold iron hot by striking. We have sometimes eaten till we have gained an appetite, so let us pray till we pray. God will help you in the pursuit of duty, not in the neglect of it.

The same is the case with regard to *spiritual sicknesses*. Sometimes it is not merely the body or the mind which is affected, but our inner nature is dull, stupid, lethargic, so that when it is time for prayer, we do not feel the spirit of prayer. Moreover, perhaps our faith is flagging and

how shall we pray when faith is so weak? Possibly we are suspicious as to whether we are the people of God at all and we are molested by the recollection of our shortcomings. Now the tempter will whisper, "Do not pray just now—your heart is not in a fit condition for it." My dear Brothers and Sisters, you will not become fit for prayer by keeping away from the Mercy Seat! But to lie groaning or breathing at its foot is the best preparation for pleading before the Lord. We are not to aim at a self-worked preparation of our hearts that we may come to God aright, but "the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue are from the Lord." If I feel myself disinclined to pray, *then* is the time when I need to pray more than ever! Possibly when the soul leaps and exults in communion with God, it might more safely refrain from prayer than at those seasons when it drags heavily in devotion. Alas, my Lord, does my soul go wandering away from You? Then come back, my heart! I will drag you back by force of Divine Grace! I will not cease to cry till the Spirit of God has made you return to your allegiance. What? My Christian Brother, because you feel idle, is that a reason why you should stay your hand and not serve your God? No, but away with your idleness and resolutely bend your soul to service! So, under a sense of prayerlessness, be more intent on prayer. Repent that you cannot repent, groan that you cannot groan and pray until you do pray—in so doing *God will help you*.

But, it may be objected, that *sometimes we are placed in great difficulty as to circumstances* so that we may be excused from prayer. Brothers and Sisters, there are no circumstances in which we should cease to pray in some form or other. "But I have so many cares." Who among us has not? If we are never to pray till all our cares are over, surely then we shall either never pray at all, or pray when we have no more need for it! What did Abram do when he offered sacrifice to God? When the Patriarch had slaughtered the appointed creatures and laid them on the altar, certain vultures and kites came hovering around, ready to pounce upon the consecrated flesh. What did the Patriarch do? "When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." [See Sermons #420, Volume 7—ABRAM AND THE RAVENOUS BIRDS and #1993, Volume 33—DRIVING AWAY THE VULTURES FROM THE SACRIFICE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] So must we ask for Grace to drive our cares away from our devotions.

That was a wise direction which the Prophet gave to the poor woman when the Lord was about to multiply her oil. "Go, take the cruse," he said, "pour out the oil, and fill the borrowed vessels." But what else did he say? "Shut the door behind you." If the door had been open, some of her gossiping neighbors would have looked in and said, "What are you doing? Do you really hope to fill all those jars out of that little oil cruse? Why, woman, you must be mad!" I am afraid she would not have been able to perform that act of faith if the objectors had not been shut out. It is a grand thing when the soul can bolt the doors against distractions and keep out intruders—for then it is that prayer and faith will perform their miracle and our soul shall be filled with the blessing of the Lord!

Oh, for Grace to overcome circumstances and at least to breathe out prayer if we cannot reach to a more powerful form of it!

Perhaps, however, you declare that your circumstances are more difficult than I can imagine, for *you are surrounded by those who mock you and, besides, Satan, himself, molests you.* Ah, then dear Brother or Sister, under such circumstances, instead of restraining prayer, be ten times more diligent! Your position is pre-eminently perilous—you cannot afford to live away from the Throne of Grace—do not, therefore, attempt it. As to threatened persecution, pray in defiance of it. Remember how Daniel opened his window and prayed to his God as he had done before? Let the God of Daniel be your God in the chamber of prayer and He will be your God in the lions' den! As for the devil, be sure that nothing will drive him away like prayer. That couplet is correct which declares that—

**“Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees!”**

Whatever your position, if you cannot speak, cry. If you cannot cry, groan. If you cannot groan, let there be “groans which cannot be uttered.” And if you cannot even rise to *that* point, let your prayer be at least a *breathing*—a vital, sincere desire—the outpouring of your inner life in the simplest and weakest form, and God will accept it. In a word, when you cannot pray as you would, take care to pray as you can!

II. But now, a second word of instruction. It is clear from the text, from many other passages of Scripture and from general observation that **THE BEST OF MEN HAVE USUALLY FOUND THE GREATEST FAULT WITH THEIR OWN PRAYERS.**

This arises from the fact that they present living prayers in real earnest and feel far more than they can express. A mere formalist can always pray so as to please himself. What has he to do but to open his book and read the prescribed words, or bow his knee and repeat such phrases as suggest themselves to his memory or his fancy? Like the Tartarian Praying Machine, give but the wind and the wheel, and the business is fully arranged! So much knee-bending and talking and the prayer is done! The formalist's prayers are always good, or, rather, always bad, alike. But the living child of God never offers a prayer which pleases himself—his standard is above his attainments. He wonders that God listens to him and though he knows he will be heard for Christ's sake, yet he accounts it a wonderful instance of condescending mercy that such poor prayers as his should ever reach the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth!

If it is asked in what respect holy men find fault with their prayers, we reply, that *they complain of the narrowness of their desires.* O God, You have bid me open my mouth wide and you will fill it, but I do not open my mouth! You are ready to bestow great things upon me, but I am not ready to receive great things! I am straitened, but it is not in You—I am straitened in my own desires! Dear Brothers and Sisters, when we read of Hugh Latimer on his knees perpetually crying out, “O God, give back the Gospel to England,” and sometimes praying so long that he could not rise, being an aged man—and they had to lift him up from the prison floor—and he would still keep on crying, “O God, give back the Gospel to

poor England,” we may well wonder that some of us do not pray in the same way! The times are as bad as Latimer’s and we have as great a need to pray as he had, “O God, drive away this Popery once again, and give back the Gospel to England.” Then, think of John Knox. Why, that man’s prayers were like great armies for power and he would wrestle all night with God that he would kindle the light of the Gospel in Scotland. He asserted that he had gained his desire and I believe he had, and that the Light of God which burns so brightly in Scotland is much to be attributed to that man’s supplications. We do not pray like these men. We have no heart to ask for great things. A revival is waiting, the cloud is hovering over England, but we do not know how to bring it down! Oh, that God may find some true spirits who shall be as conductors to bring down the Divine Fire! We need it much, but our poor breathings—they do not come to much more—have no force, nor expansiveness, no great-heartedness, no prevalence in them!

Then, how far we fail in the matter of *faith!* We do not pray as if we believed. Believing prayer is a grasping and a wrestling, but ours is a mere puffing and blowing, a little breathing—not much more. God is true and we pray to Him as if He were false. He means what He says, and we treat His Word as if it were spoken in jest. The master-fault of our prayer is lack of faith.

How often do we lack *earnestness!* Such men as Luther had their will of Heaven because they *would* have it! God’s Spirit made them resolute in intercession and they would not come away from the Mercy Seat till their suit was granted. But we are cold, and consequently feeble, and our poor, poor prayers in the Prayer Meeting, in the closet and at the family altar languish and almost die!

How much, alas, is there of *impurity of motive* to mar our prayers! We ask for revival, but we want our own Church to get the blessing that we may have the credit of it. We pray God to bless our work and it is because we wish to hear men say what good workers we are. The prayer is good in itself, but our smutty fingers spoil it. Oh, that we could offer supplication as it should be offered! Blessed be God, there is One who can wash our prayers for us but, truly, our very tears need to be wept over and our prayers need praying over again. The best thing we ever do needs to be washed in the Fountain filled with blood, or God can only look upon it as a sin.

Another fault good men see in their supplications is that *they stand at such a distance from God in praying*, they do not draw near enough to Him. Are not some of you oppressed with a sense of the distance there is between you and God? You know there is a God and you believe He will answer you, but it is not always that you come right up to Him, even to His feet and, as it were, lay hold upon Him and say, “O my Father, listen to the voice of Your chosen and let the cry of the blood of Your Son come up before You!” Oh, for prayers which enter within the veil and approach the Mercy Seat! Oh, for petitioners who are familiar with the cherubim and the brightness which shines between their wings! May God help us to pray better! But this I feel sure of—you who plead most prevalently are

just those who will think the least of your own prayers and be most grateful to God that He deigns to listen to you—and most anxious that He would help you to pray after a nobler sort.

III. A third lesson is this—THE POWER OF PRAYER IS NOT TO BE MEASURED BY ITS OUTWARD EXPRESSION.

A breathing is a prayer from which God does not hide His ear. It is undoubtedly a great Truth of God, and full of much comfort, too, that our prayers are not powerful in proportion to their expression, for, if so, the Pharisee would have succeeded since he evidently had greater gifts than the Publican had. I have no doubt, if there had been a regular Prayer Meeting, and the Pharisee and the Publican had attended, we would have called on the Pharisee to pray. I do not think the people of God would have enjoyed his prayer, nor have felt any kinship of spirit with him and yet, very naturally, on account of his gifts, he would have taken upon himself to engage in public devotion or, if that Pharisee would not have done so, I have heard of other Pharisees who would. No doubt the man's spirit was bad, but then his expression was good—he could put his oration so neatly and pour it out so accurately. Let all men know that God does not care for that! The sigh of the Publican reached His ear and won the blessing but the boastful phrases of the Pharisee were an abomination to Him!

If our prayers were forcible according to their expression, then rhetoric would be more valuable than Grace and a scholastic education would be better than sanctification—but it is not so. Some of us may be able to express ourselves very fluently from the force of natural gifts, but it should always be to us an anxious question whether our prayer is a prayer which God will receive, for we ought to know and must know by this time, that we often pray best when we stammer and stutter—and we pray worst when words come rolling like a torrent, one after another! God is not moved by words—they are but a noise to Him. He is only moved by the deep thought and the heaving emotion which dwell in the innermost spirit. It were a sorry business for you, who are poor, if God only heard us according to the beauty of our utterances, for it may be that your education was so neglected that there is no hope of your ever being able to speak grammatically. And, besides, it may be, from your limited information, that you could not use the phrases which sound so well. But the Lord hears the poor, the ignorant and the needy! He loves to hear their cry. What cares He for the grammar of the prayer? It is the soul of it that He wants! And if you cannot string three words of the Queen's English together correctly, yet if your soul can breathe itself out before the Most High anyhow—if it is but warm, hearty, sincere, earnest petitioning—there is power in your prayer and none the less power in it because of its broken words, nor would it be an advantage to you, so far as the Lord is concerned, if those words were not broken, but were well composed! Ought not this to comfort us, then?

Even if we are gifted with facility of expression, we sometimes find that our power of utterance fails us. Under very heavy grief, a man cannot speak as he is known to do. Circumstances can make the most eloquent

tongue grow slow of speech. It matters not—your prayer is as good as it was before. You call upon God in public and you sit down and think that your confused prayer was of no service to the Church. You know not in what scales God weighs your prayer—not by quantity, but by quality—not by the outward dress of verbiage, but by the inner soul and the intense earnestness that was in it does He compute its value! Do you not sometimes rise from your knees in your little room and say, “I do not think I have prayed, I could not feel at home in prayer”? Nine times out of every ten, those prayers are most prevalent with God which we think are the least acceptable. But when we glory in our prayer, God will have nothing to do with it! If you see any beauty in your own supplication—God will not—for you have evidently been looking at your prayer and not at Him! But when your soul sees so much of *His* Glory that she cries, “How shall I speak unto You—I who am but dust and ashes?” When she sees so much of His goodness that she is hampered in expression by the depth of her own humiliation, oh, then it is that your prayer is best! There may be more prayer in a groan than in an entire liturgy. There may be more acceptable devotion in a tear that dampens the floor of yonder pew than in all the hymns we have sung, or in all the supplications which we have uttered! It is not the outward, it is the inward! It is not the lips, it is the heart which the Lord regards! If you can only breathe, your prayer is still accepted by the Most High!

I desire that this Truth may come home to any one of you who says, “I cannot pray.” It is not true. If it were necessary that in order to pray, you should talk for a quarter of an hour together, or that you should say pretty things, why then I would admit that you could not pray! But if it is only to say from your heart, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” yes, and if prayer is not saying anything at all, but desiring, longing, hoping for mercy, for pardon, for salvation, no man may say, “I cannot,” unless he is honest enough to add, “I cannot because I *will* not. I love my sins too well and have no faith in Christ. I do not desire to be saved.” If you will to pray, O my Hearer, you can pray! He who gives the will joins the ability to it!

And oh, let me say, do not sleep this night until you have tried and proved the power of prayer! If you feel a burden on your heart, tell the Lord! Cover your face and speak with Him. Even that you need not do, for I suppose that Hannah did not cover her face when Eli saw her lips move and supposed that she was drunk. No, your lips need not even move! Your soul can now say, “Save me, my God! Convict me of sin, lead me to the Cross! Save me tonight! Let me not end another day as Your enemy! Let me not go into the cares of another week unforgiven, with Your wrath hanging over me like a thunder-cloud! Save me, save me, O my God!” Such prayers, though utterly wordless, shall not be powerless, but shall be heard in Heaven!

IV. We will close with a fourth practical lemon—**FEEBLE PRAYERS ARE HEARD IN HEAVEN.**

Why is it that feeble prayers are understood of God and heard in Heaven? There are three reasons.

First, *the feeblest prayer, if it is sincere, is written by the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and God will always acknowledge the handwriting of the Holy Spirit.* Frequently, certain kind friends from Scotland send me for the Orphanage some portions of what one of them called, the other day, “filthy lucre”—namely, dirty £1 notes. Now these £1 notes certainly look as if they were of small value. Still, they bear the proper signature and they pass well enough—and I am very grateful for them. Many a prayer that is written on the heart by the Holy Spirit seems written with faint ink and, moreover, it appears to be blotted and defiled by our imperfection. But the Holy Spirit can always read His own handwriting. He knows His own notes and when He has issued a prayer, He will not disown it. Therefore, the breathing which the Holy Spirit works in us will be acceptable with God.

Moreover, *God, our ever-blessed Father, has a quick ear to hear the breathing of any of His children.* When a mother has a sick child, it is marvelous how quick her ears become while attending it. Good woman, we wonder she does not fall asleep. If you hired a nurse, it is ten to one *she* would. But the dear child, in the middle of the night, does not need to cry for water, or even speak—there is a little quick breathing—who will hear it? No one would except the mother! But her ears are quick, for they are in her child’s heart. So, if there is a heart in the world that longs for God, God’s ear is already in that poor sinner’s heart! He will hear it. There is not a good desire on earth but the Lord has heard it. I recollect when, at one time, I was a little afraid to preach the Gospel to sinners as sinners, and yet I wanted to do so, so I used to say, “If you have but a millionth part of a desire, come to Christ.” I dare say more than that now, but, at the same time, I will say that at once—if you have a millionth part of a desire, if you have only a little breathing—if you desire to be reconciled, if you desire to be pardoned, if you would be forgiven, if there is only half a good thought formed in your soul, do not check it, do not stifle it and do not think that God will reject it!

And, then, there is another reason, namely, that *the Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to take the most imperfect prayer and perfect it for us.* If our prayers had to go up to Heaven as they are, they would never succeed. But they find a Friend on the way and, therefore, they prosper. A poor person has a petition to be sent in to some government agency. If he had to write it himself, it would puzzle all the officers in Downing-Street to make out what he meant. But he is wise enough to find a friend who can write, or he comes round to his minister and says, “Sir, will you make this petition right for me? Will you put it into good English, so that it can be presented? And then the petition goes in a very different form. Even thus, the Lord Jesus Christ takes our poor prayers, fashions them over again and presents the petition with the addition of His own signature—and the Lord sends us answers of peace.

The feeblest prayer in the world is heard when it has Christ’s seal to it. I mean He puts His precious blood upon it. And wherever God sees the blood of Jesus, He must and will accept the desire which it endorses. Go to Jesus, Sinner, even if you cannot pray, and let the breathing of your

soul be, “Be merciful to me, wash me, cleanse me, save me,” and it shall be done, for God will not hear your prayer so much as hear His Son’s blood, “which speaks better things than that of Abel.” A louder voice than yours shall prevail for you! And your feeble breathings shall come up to God covered over with the Omnipotent pleadings of the Great High Priest who never asks in vain!

I have been aiming thus to comfort those distressed ones who say they cannot pray, but before I close, I must add how inexcusable are those who, knowing all this, continue prayerless, Godless and Christless! If there were no mercy to be had, you could not be blamed for not having it. If there were no Savior for sinners, a sinner might be excused for remaining in his sin. But there is a Fountain and it is open—why, then, do you not wash in it? Mercy is to be had “without money and without price”—it is to be had by *asking* for it. Sometimes poor men are shut up in the condemned cell, sentenced to be hanged. But suppose they could have a free pardon by asking for it and they did not do so—who would pity them? God will give His blessing to everyone who is moved to seek for it sincerely at His hands on this one and only condition—that the soul will trust in Jesus! And even that is not a condition, for He *gives* repentance and faith and enables sinners to believe in His dear Son! Behold Christ crucified, the saddest and yet the gladdest sight the sun ever beheld! Behold the eternal Son of God made flesh and bleeding out His life! A surpassing marvel of woe and love! A look at Him will save you! Though you are on the borders of the grave and on the brink of Hell, by one look at Jesus crucified your guilt shall be cancelled, your debts forever discharged before the Throne of God and yourselves led into joy and peace. Oh, that you would give that look!

Breathe the prayer, “Lord, give me the faith of Your elect and save me with a great salvation!” Though it is only breathing, yet, as the old Puritan says, when God feels the breath of His child upon His face, He smiles. And He will feel your breath and smile on you, and bless you. May He do so, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LAMENTATIONS 3:1-36.**

The first part of this chapter is one of the saddest in the whole Book of God, yet I expect it has ministered as much consolation as some of the brightest pages of Holy Writ because there are children of God who are the subjects of great suffering and sorrow—and when they turn to such a passage as this, they see that one of the Lord’s own Prophets had gone that way before them. And when they see the footprints of another of God’s people in the dark and gloomy valley that they are traversing, they are encouraged. Besides, the chapter does not end as it begins. There is daylight for the poor sufferer after all, so we shall read the sad utterances of the Prophet in the hope that if we have ever known experiences similar to his, we may learn where to find comfort even as he did.

Verses 1, 2. *I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light.* This seems to be the hardest part of our lot—that God should lead us into darkness—“He has led me and brought me into darkness.” Yet dear Brothers and Sisters, that is, on the other hand, the sweetest thing about our trial, because if the darkness is in the place where God has led us, it is best for us to be in the dark! A child of God in the dark should derive much comfort from the thought, “My father brought me here and He loves me so much that He would not bring me where I would be in danger. He must have had some good end and objective in view in what He has done.” Surely, there is something comforting to the tried child of God in that thought.

3-5. *Surely against me is He turned; He turns His hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin has He made old; He has broken my bones. He has besieged me, and compassed me with gall and woe.* “I am like a besieged city that has strong forts built all round it to shut it in on all sides.”

6, 7. *He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chains heavy.* Ah, dear Friends, it is easy for some people to read such a passage as this, but there are others who have read it with aching brows and eyes red with weeping! And often, I doubt not, as they have read the Prophet’s descriptions of just such sorrows as they are themselves feeling, they have said, “Then after all, we are not alone in our griefs, and we may yet be delivered even as Jeremiah was”

8. *Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.* What a sorrow is this—to feel that even prayer itself is unavailing! Yet this suppliant was no graceless sinner—he was a dear child of God, one of the noblest of the Lord’s ancient Prophets, one of the most faithful of His ministers! You must not think, because sometimes your prayers seem to be unheard or unheeded, and you are allowed to continue in sorrow, that therefore the Lord does not love you. “Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” And that word, “scourges,” is a very strong one, meaning much more than just an ordinary whipping.

9. *He has enclosed my ways with hewn stone.* “The Lord has shut me right up, as if He had built a wall around me on every side.”

9-13. *He has made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. He has turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to enter into my reins.* The King’s arrows had wounded him to the very quick. Perhaps some of you may know what it is to go to the Bible and yet to find no comfort in it, for the precious promises have seemed to be too good to be true to you, and you seem to have hunted out every dark and threatening passage at once—and you have said, “Ah, that belongs to me!” You have written bitter things against yourself and have thought that surely you were the target at which God was shooting His sharpest **ARROWS**. [See Sermon #3039, Volume 53—THE KING’S SHARP ARROWS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14-17. *I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day. He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel, He has covered me with ashes. And You have removed my soul far off from peace: I have forgotten prosperity.* “It seems so long since I have had any prosperity that I have forgotten it. I have become so accustomed to trouble and sorrow that it seems as if I had never known what joy was.” The original is even more sad, “I forget good.”

18-21. *And I said, Your strength and my hope is perished from the LORD; remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* And as long as your afflictions, poor troubled Souls, have really humbled you, you may have hope! Recall to mind the fact that God’s chastising blows have brought you down to His feet in humble submission and ended all your boasting—and therein you may have hope. [See Sermon #654, Volume 11—MEMORY—THE HANDMAID OF HOPE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

22. *It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.* See where Jeremiah gets his comfort! He seems to say, “Bad as my case is, it might have been worse, for I might have been consumed, and I should have been consumed if the Lord’s compassions had failed.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, and we, too, might have been in Hell at this very moment! Amidst the hottest flames of that hopeless place we might have been enduring the wrath of God, but we are not there and, blessed be His name for that! “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.” He still has compassion upon us! If He had not, He would have given us up altogether! But there is love in His heart, even while there is a frown upon His brow—and while His hand is smiting us, His heart is still loving us.

23. *They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.* If every day brings its trouble, every day also brings its mercy. Up to this day, at all events, we have not perished. The Lord has chastened us, but He has not crushed us. We have been cast down, but we have not been destroyed. “Great is Your faithfulness.” No man can say that so truly as the one who has known what it is to prove that great faithfulness in great affliction. But when there has been a great trial, the believing soul has cast itself upon the ever-faithful God and so has been able to set its seal to this Truth of God, “Great is your faithfulness.”

24. *The LORD is my portion, says my soul.* What? With His mouth full of gravel stones, and made drunk with wormwood, overwhelmed with sorrow, yet he says, “the Lord is my portion”? Oh, yes, Beloved, whatever else we have lost, we have not lost our God! The thieves have robbed us of our little spare cash, but they could not get at the gold that we have in the bank, they could not break into the great treasure house of everlasting love. John Bunyan says, “LittleFaith lost his spending money, but the thieves could not find his jewels.” Nor can they find ours! They are all safe. “The Lord is my portion, says my soul.”

24. *Therefore will I hope in Him.* If I cannot cast the anchor of hope anywhere else, I may “hope in Him.” And what better hope do I need than that?

25. *The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.* Do not be in a hurry. Do not expect to be delivered out of your trouble the first time you begin to cry unto God. Oh, no—“the Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.” [See Sermon #2436, Volume 41—“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

26. *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.* God’s time is always the best time. To deliver you just now might be to deprive you of the benefit of the trouble. You must bear it till it produces “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” When the doctor puts on a blister, we are not to take it off the next minute. No, patience must have her perfect work, that we “may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

27, 28. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* [See Sermon #1291, Volume 22—THE BEST BURDEN FOR YOUNG SHOULDERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *He sits alone and keeps silence because He has laid it upon him.* When it makes a man get alone to contemplate and meditate, affliction is already doing him good.

29. *He puts his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.* [See Sermon #2468, Volume 42—SOLITUDE, SILENCE, SUBMISSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That is the way to find it—not lifting your mouth up to defy the Lord, or to murmur at Him, nor yet opening your mouth in boastfulness, but putting your mouth in the dust—that is the way to find hope! A humble, penitent, resigned, silent, submissive spirit will soon find hope.

30, 31. *He gives his cheek to him that smites him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever.* Oh, get a grip of that blessed Truth of God! I pray you, O you sons of trouble, lay hold of it and never let it go! The Lord may, to all appearance, cast off for a little while, but He will not cast off forever!

32-34. *But though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth.* That is not God’s way of acting. Tyrants may do so, but the tender, compassionate God—our gracious, loving Father—will never do that. If you lie in the dust before Him, He will not tread on you.

35, 36. *To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approves not.* Again I say, that is not God’s way of acting.

—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.**

A WONDER EXPLAINED BY GREATER WONDERS NO. 1812

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 7, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“You drew near in the day that I called
upon You: You said, Fear not.”
Lamentations 3:57.*

How different are our experiences from our fears! This man of God had said, “When I cry and shout He shuts out my prayer.” He had said again, “You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.” He had added to that, “Surely against me is He turned.” But now he corrects his misapprehensions. Neither was prayer shut out, nor had God turned against him, for he joyfully confesses, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not.” As much as to say—“Not only did You hear me, but You did come to me! Not only did You hear me speak, but You did speak, Yourself, and I heard You say—‘Fear not.’ Not only were You not turned against me as an enemy, but You did prove Yourself my Friend by being my loving and tender Comforter.”

Brothers and Sisters, if our experiences have, so far, *exceeded* our expectations and belied our doubts, let us take care that we record them! Do not let us suffer our lamentations to be written in a book and our thanksgivings to be spoken to the wind. Write not your complaints in marble and your praises upon the sand! Let the record of mercy *received* be carefully made, accurately measured, distinctly worded, correctly dated and so preserved that in years to come you may turn for your encouragement to it. Jeremiah tells us that on such a day the Lord drew near to him. David remembered God from the Hermons and the hill Mizar—time and place are elements of interest in the memory of the Lord's great goodness.

Note the particulars, dwell on the details—abundantly utter the memory of the Divine loving kindness! Maybe your children and your children's children may read the story of your experience for their learning—and nothing can be more fitting than that the fathers should thus lay up for their children. Even though that record should contradict yourself and bring the blush of shame to your cheek to think you should have so calumniated your God, yet write it clearly and let it stand to the Lord's praise and glory—and your own comfort in some future hour of need. Write it, write it in capital letters, “I said I am cut off, but I found it was not so. You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not.”

Jeremiah seems to record this fact with a considerable amount of surprise. He marvels that God should have drawn near to him, for his condition was a very pitiful one. He was so low that life seemed ebbing out and he groaned, "He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old." In my own estimation I give one of the chief places among mortal men to the Prophet Jeremiah. He was sent of God to do a most painful duty which could not bring any honor to him, nor win for him the love of those to whom he ministered. He was sent to prophesy among a willful and disobedient people who would reject his admonitions. Like Cassandra, he spoke true tidings and sad tidings, but he was not believed. He pleaded with erring Israel—oh, how he pleaded! No Prophet is more pathetic than he. I sometimes read the book right through and it is a good thing to do that, with the books of Scripture, so as to get the run of them—if you will do this with Jeremiah, you will be borne away with the torrents of grief which swept over the Prophet's soul.

Yet how constant and steadfast he was in love to the very people who provoked and persecuted him. How he cries to God and pleads with Him on their behalf, as affectionately as if they had been the most grateful of children and he had been the most rejoicing of parents! He was a grand man, that Jeremiah. He was as a mountain torrent, familiar at once with great heights and profound abysses, deriving force from his deep descents of woe. When he penned the words of our text, his sorrow had come to a climax. They had put him into an underground cistern—I was about to say into a dry well, only it was not dry. He sank in the mire up to the armpits! Reservoirs which, at one season of the year were filled with water, were frequently used at other seasons as dungeons—and poor prisoners were let down, far beyond all reach of light or fresh air, into such horrible pits which were often knee-deep in miry clay.

Maybe the time of water floods would come on and the captive would hear the rushing of the waters down the sides of his prison and feel it flowing over the floor into some lower reservoir—so it would seem to have been with the Prophet, for he writes, "Waters flowed over my head." The Prophet's case was deplorable! He was cut off from all sound of human voices and, let him cry as he might, there was none to have any pity upon him. He was alone, forgotten, forsaken, refused by the many and abhorred by the few who were in power. Doubtless his spirit sank and we cannot wonder at it. A strong-minded, passionate patriot who would have saved his country, saw himself put aside, even, from the opportunity to rebuke and to exhort in the crisis of national calamity! When he felt most necessary to his people, he was put away.

Then it was that the Lord drew near to him. When he was most reproached and most persecuted of men, he had the sweetest sense of the nearness of the Lord whom he served! Beloved, I think we have read enough of the history of God's dealings with His people to understand that this is His way—that if He ever is absent from His people, it is not in their time of direst need—and if ever He reveals Himself to them as He does not unto the world, it is when they are forsaken of all outward consolation and, for His sake, are made to bear tribulation. The tortured martyr, the

banished Puritan, the hunted Covenanter, could each say, "You drew near in the day that I called upon You: You said, Fear not." The fainting sufferer, the weary worker, the dying Believer has each, in like manner, joyed in the nearness of the Lord! Is it not written, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you. Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God"?

Whatever wonder there was in the heart of Jeremiah that God should draw near to him, you and I must have felt even greater wonder whenever God has drawn near to us! We have cried out, like David, "What is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man that You visit him?" It is to us a standing miracle that the great and glorious and thrice holy God should ever come and reveal Himself in a way of love to us insignificant, dishonored, guilty sons of men!

This morning my subject is, first, *an explanation of this wonder*, that God should draw near to us. And then, secondly, *a further enlargement of that wonder*. I hope many of us can say, "You drew near in the day that I called upon You." May the Holy Spirit refresh us while we call this experience to mind.

I. Let us set forth some sort of AN EXPLANATION OF THIS WONDER. God does draw near to men. He that fills all things communes with those who are *less than nothing and vanity!* The Eternal converses with the creatures of a day! He who is inconceivable in the majesty of His Nature, nevertheless permits us, who are but dust and ashes, to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend! Why is this? I shall not abate the wonder if I somewhat explain it by mentioning other facts equally wonderful—great things and unsearchable, drawn from the vast deeps of the Divine working.

The first thought I would suggest to you is that *men have always been in the thoughts of God*. As we are taught by the Word of God, God has always had a very singular regard to man. Of the eternal Wisdom we read, "My delights were with the sons of men." Long before man was created, it was in the eternal purpose that such a singular and specially favored being should be formed—and all things concerning Covenant purposes and designs were written in that book into which angels may not look. I believe that from of old, the creation and the sanctification of elect manhood was the apex of the great pyramid of the Divine Purpose, the focus of the Divine Glory, that for which all other things were made. There never was a time in which God, in the thoughts of His heart, was not familiar with man! Of old there was a Covenant of Peace on man's behalf and love everlasting dictated every line. "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God!"

When the time came for man's actual creation, those thoughts began to take a visible effect. You must have noticed what a different tone there is in the language of Moses when he reaches the creation of man. The world, the lights of Heaven, the trees, the beasts, the birds, the fish start into life at the almighty bidding—but when it comes to *man*, a council is convened

and the three Persons appear, saying, "Let Us make man." Here is a clearer revelation of the Godhead and of the inter-communion in the Divine Unity. It is added, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." There is something of the image and likeness of God in all that He makes, for the work always bears some trace of the Worker. But, "Our image, after Our likeness"—is not for the lion or the eagle, nor for the stars or the sun, but only for man!

I read not concerning seraphim, nor any of the angelic hierarchy, that they bear the image and the likeness of God, but so it is written of man—"Let Us make man in Our image." There was always about man some high intent of God not then apparent and, indeed, never seen till He appeared who is at once God and Man. In the creation of man, the Lord always had an eye to that Man of men, the Lord Jesus, up to whom all things lead. In the formation of man, God widened His communion with His creatures—He began, for the first time, to hold communion with a being who is only in *part* spiritual and, as to a part of his nature is linked with materialism. God communed with Adam and thereby placed him in an honor, in which, alas, he continued not. It was a wonderful thing, that creation of man—I shall have to tell you a little more about it before I have done—but in the very fact that man was made in so special a manner, there was a drawing near of God to man.

Afterwards all the Providences of God worked for the creation and conservation of a chosen seed—the fetching out and the maintaining of a people separated from the world—a peculiar people, richly favored, towards whom all the thoughts of God were thoughts of love. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. 32:8). Whether it was Shem, or Ham, or Japheth—these and their descendants were sent here and there where they might best subserve the interests of the Kingdom of God. At this moment the whole conformation of humanity on the face of the globe bears a direct relation to the ultimate Church of God. Thrones and crowns must all be subordinate to the main purpose of God concerning His elect—it has *been* so and it *shall* be so—even to the end!

Depend upon it, the ultimate result of everything in politics has to do with the eternal purpose of God in reference to His Church! Whether there are wars, or rumors of wars, or famines, or pestilences—whatever armies shall come or go, or dynasties shall rise or fall—*all* works to the one end. The wheels within wheels, all full of eyes, revolve not without purpose, but they move always in a straight line towards this end—the accomplishment of the design of God in reference to His own elect! I do not, therefore, wonder that God should draw near to His people when I see Him always doing so and, when I perceive that they are most upon His mind and nearest to His heart!

But secondly, remember that God has drawn nearer to us than we have as yet hinted at, in becoming *tenderly near in nature*. There was a day, in the fullness of time, when the Son of God took our nature upon Himself. Marvel of marvels! He that made all things became a babe at Bethlehem,

bore all the weakness and infirmity of infancy, passed through all the growth of boyhood, arrived at a toilsome manhood and then finished His life-course! Jesus did not wear a nature *like* ours, but He bore our *actual* nature—our flesh and blood! Sin is not of the essence of manhood and Jesus had no sin—but all that is really manhood belongs to the Son of Man who is, also, “over all, God blessed forever.” He became verily and assuredly Man of the substance of His mother—and this day, the next of kin to every Believer is the Lord Jesus Christ!

We say of Him sweetly what Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz, “The Man is near of kin unto us.” Jesus is our next kinsman! If I were in trouble in a foreign land, it would be pleasant to hear the voice of an Englishman, but it would be even more encouraging to spy out a neighbor, a fellow citizen of the same town. But most of all it would be cheering to perceive that a dear friend, a brother, a husband was to the front on our behalf. Such a near and dear Friend is Jesus to each one of those the Father has given Him! Look, here is your Brother, O Believer, a Brother of such tender sensibilities and of such quick sympathies, that in every pang that tears the heart, He takes His share! Do you wonder, therefore, that when you call upon Him, He draws near to you? It were not like He to hide Himself from His own flesh! It were not like the Son of David to wear a heart of stone towards His poor afflicted brethren! His Nature is love, itself! He will, He *must*, come to you that are in sorrow—and sorrow *with* you and thus cheer your hearts—for not in vain does He wear your nature and not in vain, in that Nature, has He suffered and died for you.

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus was *especially near to His people in the days of His life on earth*. He was no mere observer of men, passing through our midst as an English traveler might pass through China or Tartary, seeing everything, but sharing nothing. It is very beautiful to my mind to reflect upon the nearness of Christ as Man to men, for there are certain men who, by temper, spirit and behavior, are a long way off from the rest of mankind. Look at your princes and your autocrats—they are scarcely to be seen with a telescope! They do not appear to be persons of like feelings with ourselves. Look at your exquisites, your men of pride, your men of pretended culture who bear their heads above the clouds.

But Jesus was the most manlike of all men. I could propound to you, today, the theory that Jesus was an Englishman—and prove it from many points of His Character if I did not know that He was of the seed of Abraham. Jesus of Nazareth is a Jew, but there is no Jewish peculiarity about Him. He is a Man in the broadest, truest sense. It matters not to you or me what nationality He actually came from, for the most cosmopolitan of men was the Christ of God! I know several excellent men whom I love and revere, but I despair of imitating them—the color of their virtue has a tint in it peculiar to themselves. I am not made of such stuff as would ever work up into their fashion, admirable though it is. But I never thought thus concerning the Lord Jesus! I always feel that, by His Grace, I can become like He. He is infinitely superior to those admirable friends of whom I have spoken and yet He is more imitable! The hill is higher, but in His case there are ways and steps which invite—in the other cases there are

craggs which warn us off. I have known good men with whom I shall never be thoroughly at home until we meet in Heaven—at least we shall agree best on earth when they go their way and I go mine! One never feels so with regard to the all-glorious Lord Jesus. There our cry is, “Nearer, my Lord, to You. Nearer to You.” He draws us to Himself and the nearer we come, the more fully we appreciate Him. If Jesus came thus near to men in His life on earth, do you wonder that He draws near to them now?

Carefully notice that this was a nearness to *sinful* men. For, being here on earth, He did not select for His companions persons of high religious repute, men who practiced austerities, or severed themselves from common life. He went down among the fishermen of Galilee. He associated with poor people, uncultured and simple-minded. Yes, He dwelt among the *sinful* people—“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” He ate and drank with them till men said, “This Man receives sinners and *eats* with them!” He was at ease at the social board where sat disreputable persons. He ate what they ate, drank what they drank and kept up no distinction such as the religious teachers of His day judged to be decorous and necessary.

You and I are sinners, too, and our Redeemer’s nearness to the sinners of Judea meant nearness to us. Oh, it is wonderful, that blessed nearness of Christ to men and women! There were no moats and walls separating Him from men, but all comers were received! They advanced right up to His heart, unchallenged, and they spoke into His soul as though they were familiar friends! Do you think it amazing that today Jesus should draw near unto His own people when they are in their time of sorrow? I do not. Remembering the sweet familiarities of the Nazarene, it seems *natural* that He should manifest Himself to His own redeemed. With holy adoring gratitude would I say, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You”—a favor to be exceedingly valued, but not altogether unexpected from such an One as the Friend of sinners!

Further, dear Friends, Jesus Christ *came still nearer to us in His death*. How wonderfully near Jesus came to sinful men when He was delivered up to His enemies to suffer death! To die at all was, for Him, the closest fellowship with man, for death—say what you like about it—must always remain a penalty for sin. And as such our Lord endured it. He did not pass through death as a necessity of Nature, for it was no necessity of Nature to Him. He died of set purpose for the bearing of our sin and the putting away of it by the endurance of the death penalty. Just think of it! Would you have supposed that Christ would come so near to us that He would be found in the felon’s dock? Yet there He stood! Do you seek Him? Would you speak with Him? Will you go to the palace of the King, asking for Him? If you do, you must enter the Judgment Hall, for there He stands—bound, accused and tried!

They charge Him with sedition and blasphemy. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” There had been an entry made in the imperial registry of His name as a child, born at Bethlehem, and now a second registration must be made of Him! And He is entered in Pilate’s book as a malefactor—one of three who, on the same day, were given up to be hanged upon

crosses for their crimes. He was numbered with the transgressors in so effectual a way that He suffered with them. Not only was the registration made, but the decree of Pontius Pilate was carried out—Jesus died in the common place of execution between two thieves! They put Him in the middle because it was the place of pre-eminence—He was judged to be the chief criminal. In the end of His life, He draws so near us that He dies among transgressors—“He made His grave with the wicked.”

When they took down the carcasses of the thieves, they removed His body, also, and His remains were given up to His friends as the remains of one who had paid the last penalty of the law. It was not merely in appearance and name that all this was so, for though no sin ever touched the blessed Person of Christ so as to defile it—and He remains forever One of whom the Apostle says, “In Him is no sin.” Yet there was a passing over of sin to Him and, by way of imputation, He was justly numbered with transgressors—and justly put to death with them. “For the transgression of My people was He stricken.” “He bore the sin of many.” He was made “sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” This is coming wonderfully near to us! Sin is, of all things, the greatest divider between a holy God and an unholy creature—and if Jesus comes as our Beloved, leaping over the mountains of transgression and skipping over the hills of sin—what is to divide Him from His poor, suffering, but sanctified and justified people? I wonder not that it is written, “You drew near in the day that I called upon You.”

He is now in Heaven! Turn your thoughts up to Him there. *In Heaven He is still perpetually near us.* Beloved, He has carried our nature into Heaven! The *body* of the Lord Jesus in Glory is the same as that which was laid in the tomb! He sits on the Throne of the Highest in that humanity which He received of Mary. The nail prints were visible while He was here after His Resurrection and they are still manifest. “He looks like a Lamb that has been slain.” His wounds forever remind the saints of His finished sacrifice. And what is He in Heaven? He is there as our Representative. He is member of Heaven’s high Parliament for the sons of men and He holds His seat as such. He is head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all! What is He doing in Heaven? He is not only representing us, but He is preparing a place for us—making a niche in Heaven for you, a place in Heaven for me—and all the while He is continually offering intercession for His people. “He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors,” therefore, “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

Oh, You blessed risen Christ, I am not astonished that You come even to my bedside and make the watches of the night bright to me with the Glory of Your Presence, since even the sublimities of Heaven and all the sonnets of the seraphim cannot take Your mind off, for a single moment, Your own chosen people! Remember how our Lord said of old—“For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns”? Always bearing our names upon His

breastplate, always beholding us as engraved upon His hands, He is constantly so near to us that He cannot be nearer!

I have thus shown you, I think, why Jesus so readily draws near to us at the voice of our cry. But there is one more matter of which I would speak and that is so deep and mysterious that I would especially seek the guidance of the Spirit of God before I speak upon it. Far be it from me to set forth mere imaginations! I would only speak as the Scripture warrants me. Jesus may well come near to His people, for *there is a mystical union which ensures it*. A Divine doctrine, this, of which Paul says, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church”—and this in relation to the *marriage* union. As sometimes in the worship of the heathen they cried, “Far hence, you profane,” for only the initiated might draw near to that special mystery, so I feel inclined, when I am speaking upon this, to warn off all wanton ears and careless minds.

There is a union between Christ and His Church which can only be shadowed out by the union between a husband and his bride. I scarcely dare speak of it in words, it is so holy and Divine. It has been said and thought—and I think correctly—that though Adam and Eve fell by the same sin, yet they came to it by different ways. Paul tells us in his Epistle to Timothy that, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.” She fell by being tempted and misled. But why did Adam eat? Was it not probably from excessive love of the *creature*, a love of his wife beyond his God—as great a sin as the other and, perhaps, more deliberate? Milton, we believe, was no dreamer when he pictured Adam as meeting Eve after she had eaten the forbidden fruit, and saying to her—

***“I with you have fixed my lot,
Certain to undergo like doom:
If death consorts with you,
Death is to me as life
So forcible within my heart I feel
The bond of Nature draw me to my own
My own in you, for what you are is mine.
Our state cannot be severed; we are one,
One flesh. To lose you were to lose myself.”***

It was a desperate thing for Adam to do, to disobey his Maker and defy His wrath—but he felt he was so one with her that he would share her destiny. Will you now think of Him who is called the Second Adam? He could not sin, nor in any shape or form become partaker with iniquity. But when that Church of His, which was His bride, that God had given Him to be His forever, had fallen, He resolved to maintain the bond which bound Him to her and to suffer all the penalties which would inevitably follow—

***“Yes, said the Lord, with her I’ll go,
Through all the depths of pain and woe.
And on the Cross will even dare
Her bitter cup of death to share.”***

And so, never polluted, never, Himself, a sinner, yet out of infinite love—that love bottomed upon an eternal, mystical union between Himself and His elect—the great Head of the Church came and deliberately took

our nature and all the consequences of our sin, that He might be one with us forever. He went down to the depths with us, that He might bring us up into the heights with Himself—that there His enthroned bride should be forever with Him—a queen more glorious than eternity had ever seen! The Church was taken out of the side of Christ and, in her case, it may be fitly said, “The woman is of the man. The man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.” Christ and His Church are no longer two, but one by a strange, mysterious union which He thus describes—“I in them and they in Me.”

Who shall separate what God has joined together? Now do you wonder that Jesus draws near unto His people? I should marvel if He did not, for would any of us wish to be away when our dear spouse is suffering? When her heart is heavy, is not ours heavy, too? In a true, conjugal love, such as I trust many of you feel, there is a degree not merely of similarity and of communion, but even of *identity* between the two that have become one. Now, we that are joined unto the Lord are one spirit, one by eternal union and He must, therefore, draw near to us in a way of sympathy and fellowship.

II. I have tried to set forth this mystery as best I can. Now I ask your attention for the few minutes that remain to THE WONDER ITSELF. What I have said makes it less surprising and yet fills us with greater surprise. In one respect it makes it not wonderful, but in others it makes it more wonderful than ever, that God, Himself, in Christ, should draw near to us! In desiring you to notice the wonder itself, I would remind you, first, that *by no means is this wonder at all contrary to expectation*, when expectation is founded upon an enlightened understanding. It is natural, it is necessary, that Christ should come near to a people whom He loves so well. Love is attractive. It may be that absence makes the heart grow fonder, but a fond heart hates absence as it hates the fiend—and so the heart of Christ desires not the absence of the Beloved and will not have it, either—for the blood of Christ gives access to Christ and the heart of Christ, out of which that blood comes, is never content until there is constant, intimate, unbroken fellowship between the redeemed and the Redeemer. Do you not hear Him say, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am”? I say it is a great wonder that God should dwell with men, but it is not a wonder contrary to expectation.

But, dear Friends, if you have ever enjoyed this communion, let me help you to describe it, that you may wonder at it. *What is the manner in which God draws near to His people in their time of trouble?* At times He draws near to us by a secret strengthening of us to bear up when we are under pressure. We may have no marked joys, nor special transports—but quiet, calm, subdued joy rules the spirit. To my mind, the best of states is the deep calm which comes of the peace of God which passes all understanding. I care not so much for brilliant and gaudy-colored joys—neutral tints of quiet joy suit my soul’s eyes far better. I will not ask to see the sun above me, but I will be content to feel that, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Do you not remember that when the burden came, you feared it, but did not feel it, for the shoulder had grown stronger? When the need came which you dreaded so terribly, it turned out to be no need at all—for He who refused the meal also removed the hunger—He who denied the garment took away the cold. The secret sustenance of the soul by God is very precious. It is not observed of men, but therein the saints are made to magnify their God. That unseen casting on of oil upon the fire, behind the wall, is what we need—and it is a very charming way of the Lord's drawing near to us in the time of trouble.

Furthermore, the good Lord often vouchsafes to His people in their time of great pain and weakness and weariness a doubly vivid sense of His love. It is not merely that they believe in that love as they find it recorded, though that is a very delightful matter, but they feel this love in the delight of it. They know beyond all doubt and they feel beyond all question—"He loved me and gave Himself for me." The alabaster box which they were accustomed to hold firmly in the hand of faith is now broken, by love, and poured out by enjoyment, so that the smell which was before latent, now perfumes all the soul! It is wonderful what you can bear in suffering and what you can go through in labor when, "a secret something sweetens all"—that secret something the love of God!

It is dark, it is very dark. "No," says that inner spirit that dwells behind the eyes, "I see clearly the Lord's wisdom and love even in this dispensation." It is cold and chill. "No," says the soul, "I am warmed and comforted by the love of Jesus, the fire of love burns within me, I am even consumed therewith." Do you know what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in your soul by the Holy Spirit? If so, then you know what it is for God to draw near in the day when you call upon Him. At such times the Lord grants us a sensible assurance of His sympathy with us. We feel that every stroke of the rod comes distinctly from a Father's hand who does not willingly afflict. We look up into His face and feel that like as a father pities his children, so does He pity us. We enter into the sorrow of our Father's heart while He is causing us grief—with greater grief to Himself. We come to feel what it is to be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord Himself.

Extraordinary expression, is it not, where one said, "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord your God." We are joined unto the Lord and know it by feeling His heart beat with our heart! It is a high degree of Grace to be so in sympathy with God, in His afflicting us, that we would not have Him cease for our crying. Let Him continue to do His will even though He crossed our wills! Let our vine be pruned, yes, as sharp as may be, till it bleeds again, if the Vinedresser sees that thus the clusters will be multiplied. Whenever you get there, you will have well-near reached the end of your chastisement—it has already produced the desired fruit!

The Lord draws near to His people's souls, sometimes, by a very speedy and remarkable deliverance out of the trouble under which they groan. He can draw near to you when you are plunged in poverty and He can suddenly lift you to competence. When everything goes against you, He can,

in a moment, raise up a friend. When it appears that no chance nor change can set you free, He can, Himself, be your Deliverer. Did He not bring up Joseph out of the prison and set him on the throne of Pharaoh? He can do the same with you if He wills, before your sun has gone down! Nothing is impossible with God. The deliverances which He has promised to His people, not only in ancient times, but in modern times, are such as to make us feel we dare not doubt, much less despair. "Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

I am not quite done. I want you to notice the text again—will you, please? If you will look at it, you will notice that in the record *there seems to be some surprise concerning the memorable graciousness of God*. "You drew near in the day that I called upon You." Then, I suppose, there were other days in which he had *not* called upon God, or at least had not done so so memorably. But in the first day when I called upon You, You drew near to me. Does not that give us a hint, as if he said, "I had neglected my God. I had failed to apply to Him. My faith had been asleep but, as soon as I awoke, the Lord drew near to me"? Come, then, you that have treated the Lord badly—do not stand back through guilty shame! Though you believe not, He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself. All your sins and all your wanderings have not alienated His great heart from you! Return repentingly and begin again—begin from this day and you shall find that He will at once bless you!

There seems to me to also be a *Nota Bene* here, a kind of hand in the margin to point out *the promptness of God*. "You drew near in the day that I called upon You"—the very day he called, God came! No sooner the prayer, than the answer! Oh, the blessed quickness of God! When David cried to Him, he says, "He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind." No pace is too swift for God to come to the deliverance of His people! He is slow to anger, but He is swift in mercy. Try it, you downcast and broken-hearted ones! Try it, today, and then come and tell us if it is not so. "You drew near in the day that I called upon You." I shall expect to see some of you coming forward to join the Church, saying, "It was so, Sir. I no sooner began to pray than the Lord appeared to me! He brought me up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and He has put a new song into my mouth and established my goings!"

One thing more—*observe the extreme tenderness of all this*. "You drew near in the day that I called upon You, and said, Fear not." You remember that text, "He gives liberally and upbraids not"? Here is an illustration of it! Why, I should have thought that when God came near to Jeremiah, He would have said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" It would have been a very gentle rebuke, but I should have expected as much as that. And if the Lord had come to Jeremiah and said, "You neglected to call upon Me and, therefore, you fell into this trouble," who would have wondered? But no! The Lord's whole thoughts were about His dear child and so He said nothing to him to wound him, but everything to comfort him! Tenderly He cried, "Fear not!"

You mothers leave your children, for a little, to play together when you are at work in the house, and presently you hear a crash and a cry. One of the children has met with a heavy fall. He was climbing where he ought not to have gone and he has had a serious tumble. One child cries, "Mother, Johnny is killed!" Well, you know if you enquired into the matter you would find that Johnny deserved blame, but you do not enquire. You rush to pick him up. You notice that bruise on his forehead and you are fearful for his legs and arms. You are ready to faint as you notice that he is bleeding. Do you scold him? Ah, no! You fall to kissing the poor child—his fault is ignored—you only think of his pain! Your only concern is about himself.

And so with our gracious God! He comes to His poor, suffering, down-cast people and what He says to them is not—"You should not have done so-and-so. This is very wrong of you. I must terribly correct you." No, but He says, "Fear not, I have forgiven you and I will deliver you." Remember the father in the parable when the prodigal came back? Did he lecture him upon his immoralities? Did he say a word about his ingratitude and folly? He did not notice his pimpled face and point to his blotches as the result of his excess in wine with his riotous companions. He did not point to his rags and tell him that these came from his profligate expenditure. No, he said not a word of upbraiding, but only, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hands and shoes on his feet."

That is just what the heavenly Father will do and say if we call upon Him! Therefore let us call upon Him in truth from this moment, before we leave the pew, and may the Lord cause us, before long, to say, "You drew near in the day that I called upon You, and You said unto me, Fear not." God bless you dear Friends, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Lamentations 3:1-33.*
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—27, 34 (PART I), 627.**

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GOD PLEADING FOR SAINTS AND SAINTS PLEADING FOR GOD NO. 579

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 10, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul;
You have redeemed my life.”
Lamentations 3:58.*

THE Prophet speaks experimentally as of a matter which he had proved for himself. There is no true understanding of the Truths of God except by a *personal* experience of them. We have heard of men sitting in their drawing rooms and writing volumes on voyages and travels—but such books always bear the marks of fiction upon their title page—they can never vie in interest and freshness with the adventures of men who have actually traversed lands unknown. The botanist who shall never have seen a flower must necessarily be a mere pretender to the science. And the soldier who has never shouldered a gun is nothing but a raw recruit.

And so the man who knows the Truth of God only in the letter of it, by what he has heard with his ears, but does not know it by what, “he has tasted and his hands have handled and his eyes have looked upon of the Word of Life,” knows, indeed, nothing to any purpose and it were well for him to confess his ignorance. Our Prophet puts it not, “Lord, You have pleaded the causes of another man’s soul,” but, “You have pleaded the causes of *my* soul.” At the opening of this discourse I invite you to ask yourselves whether you have an interest in this pleading. Has the Lord pleaded the causes of your soul?

Such a suggestion may be of great service to you. That eminent Puritan preacher, Mr. Thomas Dolittle, was once teaching the catechism to the children of the congregation, as was the custom of the Puritans on Sunday. He came to the question, “What is effectual calling?” The answer was given, as it stands in our admirable catechism, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills, He does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel.”

The good man stopped and said to the lads around him, “Let us use the personal pronoun in the singular—are there any among you who can say that all this is yours?” To his great joy there stood up one who with many tears and many sobs, said, “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing me of my sin and misery, enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ and renewing my will, He has persuaded and enabled me to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to me in the Gospel.”

Now this is the true way to understand any doctrine as set forth in the Word of God—by being able to feel that in your own personal case God has worked upon your soul—has brought you into reconciliation with

Himself and enabled you to rejoice in His gracious promises! You are greatly blessed if, like the Prophet, you can speak experimentally. You must not fail to observe how positively he speaks. He does not say, "I hope, I trust, I sometimes think that God has pleaded the causes of my soul." He speaks of it as a matter of fact not to be disputed. "You have pleaded the causes of my soul."

Let us, Brethren, by the aid of the gracious Comforter, shake off those doubts and fears which so much mar our peace and comfort! Be this our prayer today that we may have done with the harsh croaking voice of surmise and suspicion and may be able to speak with the clear, melodious voice of full assurance, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." I like to hear a Christian, when he tells his own experience, speak of these things as one who knows what he is talking about—not as though it were all guesswork with him—but as one who with infallible certainty, the Spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, knows that he is speaking the Truth of God.

"You have pleaded the causes of my soul." Here I must bid you observe how gratefully the Prophet speaks, ascribing all the glory to God alone. You perceive there is not a word concerning himself or his own pleadings. He does not ascribe his deliverance in any measure to any man, much less to his own merit. But it is "You"—"You, O Lord, have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life." A grateful spirit should ever be cultivated by the Christian. And especially after deliverances we should prepare a song for our God. O Believers, wake up your hearts and tune your tongues to compete with angels before the Throne! Earth should be a temple filled with the songs of grateful saints and every day should be a censer smoking with the sweet incense of thanksgiving! How joyful Jeremiah seems to be while he records the Lord's mercy! How triumphantly he lifts up the strain!

He has been in the low dungeon and is even now no other than the Weeping Prophet, poor Jeremiah. And yet in the very book which is called, "Lamentations"—clear as the voice of Miriam when she dashed her fingers against the timbrel and shrill as the note of Deborah when she met Barak with shouts of victory—we hear the voice of Jeremy going up to Heaven—"You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life"! O children of God, seek after a vital experience of the Lord's loving kindness and when you have it, speak positively of it! Sing gratefully! Shout triumphantly! And let none of your enemies stop your glorying this side of Heaven, for on the other side of the river the free Grace of God shall be your glory forever and ever—and you shall sing eternally, "You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life."

We shall occupy the time allotted to the sermon this morning, first, by considering Divine pleading as the Christian's joy. And then by talking about the Christian's pleading the causes of his God as his duty and delight. God pleads my cause—this is my joy. I must plead God's cause—this is at once my privilege and my reasonable service.

I. First, then, let us come with heartfelt joy to the consideration of DIVINE PLEADING.

1. The Lord pleads our cause in the Court of Providence. Jeremiah was confined in the low dungeon. He was cast into a wet, damp hole—a pit.

And here he would have been left to rot for no one spoke a word for him except Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian eunuch, in the service of the king. He went to Zedekiah and pleaded on behalf of poor Jeremiah. The king gave Ebedmelech leave to fetch Jeremiah out of the pit. Now, you observe, Jeremiah was never ungrateful to Ebedmelech. Ebedmelech had a blessing in return for what he did, yet Jeremiah ascribes his deliverance not to the eunuch, but to God—"You have pleaded the causes of my soul."

The Christian may expect that in the course of Providence, when he meets with trouble, God will raise up for him at different times and in unexpected quarters persons who will take an interest in him and be the means of working out his deliverance. God sits at the helm of Providence and when the vessel is almost on the rock, He can pilot it into the deep waters again! And when His servants have been obliged by the tempest to reef their sails, He knows how, as the Master of the seas, to change the winds to a gale so favorable that with all sails spread they can fly before the gale to the desired haven.

Sometimes God pleads the cause of His people by silencing their enemies. What a remarkable instance you have of this in the case of Jacob! His sons had most cruelly and basely killed the Shechemites. Having betrayed them by false promises they then slew them in cold blood. Jacob said, "You have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me. And I shall be destroyed, I and my house." How strange was it that he suffered no molestation! Surely the Lord had cast a solemn awe upon the hearts of the Canaanites round about. His all-commanding voice was heard in their hearts, "Touch not My anointed and do my Prophet no harm."

Even though Jacob's family was grossly in the wrong and his sons had committed a foul deed, yet nevertheless, the Lord pleaded the cause of His chosen servant and his enemies were as still as stones. It will often be so with the Lord's peculiar ones. When your foot has slipped—when you have spoken unadvisedly with your lips—if you have deeply repented of the sin you may leave the matter before God, and He will either silence every dog's tongue, or turn their barking to His glory.

At other times our God has pleaded the cause of His people by raising up friends for them. Take the instance of Joseph. Reuben pleads for him when his Brethren intend to kill him. When in Egypt he is put into the dungeon through a false charge brought by the wife of Potiphar. He is not treated as a common criminal, for even in the dungeon God finds him friends. He behaves himself so discreetly that the master of the prison makes him one of the keepers of the ward! The Lord gave him favor in the eyes of men.

Observe another case. Here comes a poor maiden from Moab with her mother-in-law. God will plead the cause of her soul. She goes, as many another maid had done, to the field to glean. Providence guides her to the estate of an unknown kinsman. Boaz looks upon her and before long she becomes the joy of his house and the mistress of his fields. Take a yet more remarkable case. Moses is put into the ark of bulrushes. What can the child say for itself? Among the crocodiles it lies exposed to imminent hazard. Pharaoh's daughter comes. What was that mysterious influence

which softened her heart when she looked upon that comely child as it wept in that little cradle which might soon have been its coffin?

Why was it that she said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children...take it and nurse it for me"? Why, it could only have been because God has a way of touching human hearts and making them friendly to His own people! He pleads the cause of His servants. He does not violate the wills of their enemies, but He wisely turns those wills into the channel of friendship. It was very remarkable that David, when he so much needed a friend through Saul's hostility to him, should have found one near to the throne—the heir-apparent to the kingdom. Strange that Jonathan, who naturally would have taken his father's part and would have hated David as a supplanter, should, nevertheless, have his soul so knit to the heart of David that he gives up his crown cheerfully and makes a covenant with David!

Dear Friends, you thus see that either by silencing enemies, or else by raising up friends, God can, in Providence, plead the cause of your soul! Or if men should seem to have even less than this to do with it, He knows how, by special Providences, to bring you out of the depth of your difficulties. You see this again in the case of Joseph. He was put in prison. The butler promised to speak for him, but forgot him. Well, what shall happen? The king must dream a dream. Pharaoh cannot sleep while Joseph is in the dungeon. Seven years of plenty must come and seven years of famine, in order that Joseph, falsely accused, might have his "righteousness brought forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns."

Such cases will commonly occur. No Christian man, I think, can look back through many years of his life without observing some strange and singular workings of the Divine hand by which, in an unexpected manner, God has worked his deliverance. Come then, if this is so—let us be of good cheer this morning! We need not fret and worry ourselves about worldly things for our heavenly Father pleads our cause! Tried Soul, He knows what you need this morning! You have not told anybody your distress and you need not, for He "knows that you have need of these things." He knows when it will be best for you to receive help. And if He keeps you a little time in poverty, He knows it is good for you to be left in the shade.

He understands Providence better than you do and He can make the great world a broad work to bless the little world of your heart. There is not a single wheel by which the machinery of Providence is affected which is not turned by His hand. You know His love to be as infinite as His wisdom and His power to be as great as His love—then go where your Master went when He was in the storm—to the rear of the ship and fall asleep upon the pillow of the Providence of God! You have done your best. You have worked hard. You have strived to provide things honestly in the sight of all men—and yet things do not prosper with you as you wish they would. You are content to be poor—you are willing to be in just such a place as God would put you and yet your straits and your difficulties seem just now to be too many for you!

Now is the time to exercise faith upon a living God! Your God is not worth having if He cannot help you when you want help. Surely your religion must be a lie if it cannot buoy you up under troubles which, after all, are not the heaviest which fall to the lot of men. Come, cast your burden

on your God—He cares for you! Before many days are past you shall come up to this house, if not with these words upon your tongue, yet with this sentiment in your heart, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”

2. Our text may be read with great comfort if we think upon the Court of Divine Law. You and I may picture ourselves this morning, without exaggeration or untruth, as being led into the Court of the Law. The Law at once arraigns us upon the charge of having positively broken the Commands of God. “He has broken every one of them,” says the Law, “either in deed, or word, or thought. There is not a single precept which this man has not most distinctly set at defiance.”

The witnesses appear. The devil willingly bears witness and adds many falsehoods to the accusation. The Omniscience of God stands as a swift witness against us. And our own conscience is compelled to bear testimony that we have, indeed, sinned and that we have “gone astray from the womb, speaking lies.” What is now to be done? We are asked if we have anything to say. Why sentence should not be pronounced upon us. We are silent. Well may we hold down our heads, for what reason is there why we should not be punished for the sins which we have committed? There was a time when we would have pleaded, “Not guilty,” but we know better now. We know our guilt. It stares us in the face. We cannot plead the force of temptation, for we know that often we have tempted ourselves and have, without any incentive beyond our own hearts, run greedily after sin.

The Law sits upon its throne of judgment and since we cannot plead, it makes proclamation, “Is there anyone in court who will act as advocate for this rebel whose silence and shame witness to his guilt? If there is none to show cause to the contrary, I will open the Great Book and read his sentence. I will put on the black cap and he shall be taken to doom.” Up stands the bleeding Savior, the great Advocate for sinners! What does Jesus plead? “O Justice,” says He, “I plead not that these men have not sinned—I do confess on their behalf that they have grievously erred. But I plead for them that their sin has been punished—punished in Me. All the curse of their sin was laid on Me.

“I loved them from before the foundations of the world. And having loved them I took their sin upon Myself and therefore it is not on them. I suffered in their place and therefore, Justice, you cannot punish two for one offense—having struck Me for them—you cannot now strike them. I plead My blood—these wounds of Mine, once opened by the cruel nails—this side of Mine, once rent with the spear—I plead these—My groans, My tears, My agony, My death—for these I suffered on their account. Their sin was punished in Me. Let them go free!”

Thus He pleads right gloriously. Who shall answer Him? What more is wanted? But the Law brings another charge. It says, “Granted that sin is condoned by the Atonement. Allowed that through Your sacrifice, most glorious Redeemer, Your people are free from sin, yet I demand on the behalf of God that the Law should be kept! These men were bound not merely to be negatively without sin, but they were bound positively to serve God with all their heart and soul and strength. And inasmuch as they have not done it, they cannot enter Heaven. How shall they be re-

warded for service never performed—how shall they win the crown without having kept the command?”

Here, too, we are silent, for what have we ever done? What righteousness have we? Are not our righteousnesses filthy rags, the very best of them? We dare not say, “Lord, my prayers entitle me to Heaven. My preaching, my doings, my almsgivings.” No, we know better than this! We feel that we are vile and full of sin and therefore put our finger on our lips and confess that we deserve to be shut out of Heaven. Again the Savior rises and He pleads, “I was appointed of God to be their Substitute and being such I kept the Law on their behalf! The whole of the Ten Commandments I have carried out to the fullest extent both in the letter and in the spirit. I have served God with all My soul and strength.

“I have loved My neighbor as Myself. I have been obedient to death, even to the death of the Cross. Have I not magnified the Law and made it honorable?” The Law bows its awful head and confesses, “You have, O Jesus, rendered better obedience than these men could have rendered, for You are Divine. You have brought the righteousness of God instead of the righteousness of man. You have brought Your own perfection, glorified and exalted by the splendor of Your Nature and laid it down in the place of the perfection of man which he could not bring. You have, indeed, paid the debt. You have pleaded well and the culprit is free!”

Beloved, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” My Soul, triumph in your God! This day rejoice with all your might, for Christ has prevalently pleaded your cause and you are acquitted—no, you are brought in as meritorious and accepted in the sight of God through the plea of the Beloved! Let us rejoice that in the court of Heaven’s justice we can say, “You have pleaded the causes of my soul.” O, can we all say it? Has Christ pleaded for you? Has your faith put your soul into Christ’s hands? If not, I pity you. And let every child of God pity and pray for you. But if Jesus pleads for you we will rejoice together and be glad this morning!

3. In the third place, Jesus pleads the cause of my soul in the Court of Conscience which is a minor imitation of the great Court of Heaven. Let me talk to your hearts now, Brothers and Sisters, as the Lord helps me. Sometimes you have doubts and fears springing up and conscience assists them, for it says, “You know what a guilty worm you are! What? *You* a saved soul? It was but the other day that you were murmuring at God, and doubting His faithfulness!

Look at your prayers—what cold things they are! See your daily life—what inconsistencies mingle with it! Mark your temper—how quick! How fierce! Look at yourself as to spiritual things—was there ever a more poverty-stricken soul than you are? Why, you are as black as the tents of Kedar and quite as filthy. Can you see any good thing in yourself? Why, are you not a very sink of corruption, a walking dunghill, a mass of abominations? And yet you say, ‘I am a child of God’? How can it be?” And now, when these thoughts arise, you and I find it sometimes rather hard to answer them. And if we go upon the common logic of human reason and begin to argue, “But I do find in myself some humblings of soul. I have some melting desires towards the Lord God. I find this and that and therefore I

have some evidence," it is ten to one that conscience and the devil together will beat us and we shall be ready to lie down in despair.

But, oh, how sweet it is when our soul tells of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! Then—I hope that I am now talking what you *all* know and many of you know sweetly—then as you turn to Jesus Christ and see the precious Person of the perfect Savior pouring out streams of cleansing blood—there is a voice which speaks to you and pleads the cause of your soul! You feel, "Let conscience say what he may, this blood has answered him! Let the devil suggest what he will, this complete Atonement shall shut his mouth!" "I will," says Rutherford, in one of his sweet letters, "I will hold to Christ under water and if I must drown I will not let go my hold of Him."

And so the Believer can say he has got such a grip of Jesus—such a hand-hold of the Savior—that though ten thousand times ten thousand fears should roll over his head, he sings—

***"I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me."***

Sometimes after stern conflicts a sweet peace pervades your mind. I cannot describe it better than by the calm which succeeds the tempest and its heavy showers. The whole earth appears to put on a greener dress than before. The flowers pour out their fragrance. The birds sing and men rejoice in the clear shining after the rain. So is it with us. "The time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," because Jesus Christ applies with Divine power His own merits and His own blood to our conscience and all is well!

I do not know whether you know what this means, but if any of you do not, you have lost a joy worth a thousand worlds! For out of Heaven I know of no peace like that which pervades the conscience when Jesus pleads within. Guilty we are in ourselves, but we are "complete in Him." Foul and vile I am and yet I am *perfect* in Christ Jesus—lost, ruined and undone in the first Adam—but saved and redeemed—made to sit in heavenly places in the Second Adam. Ah, doubts and fears—where are they now—when Jesus pleads for my soul? Memory may come and tell me all the past. Fear may haunt me with black visions of the future—my powers may be perverted to the service of despair—yet if my soul can keep her hold upon the finished work of my Redeemer I shall yet come off more than conqueror, singing, "You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life."

4. We have thus been to three courts—the Court of Providence, the Court of Justice and the Court of Conscience. And now, pausing awhile, I would not have you forget how Jesus Christ pleads our cause in the Court of Heaven. To a true-hearted man who lives a life of prayer it is ever a rich consolation that his prayers do not go up to Heaven alone. Jesus, our great High Priest, never ceases to intercede for His saints!

A poor man once wished to have a favor of a great one. This great lord had a son—a very kind and condescending one, who spoke to the poor man and said—"If you will write a petition to my father, he is very gracious and he will be sure to grant it. And so that you may have no doubts about the success of your petition, give it to me and I will take it in my own hand up to my father's house for you and make your case my own. I will say to him, 'My father, hear this poor man's petition, not for his own

sake, but consider it as mine. Do me the personal favor and kindness of hearing this man's prayer, as though it were my prayer—for, indeed, I make it mine!' ”

The poor man wrote out his petition, but when he had finished it, “Alas !” he said to himself, “this will never do to present before the great one. It is so full of errors! I have blotted it with my tears and where I have tried to scratch out a word which I had spelt wrongly, I have made it worse and have so badly worded the whole petition that I am afraid the great one will throw it in the fire, or never notice it.” “But,” said his friend, “I will write it out in a fair clear hand for you so that there shall be no blots and no blunders. And when I have done so, I will do as I have said—I will take it in my own hand, put my own name at the bottom of it with your name and will offer it as our joint petition. And I will put it upon this footing, ‘My father, do it for me. Not for him, but for me.’ ”

When the poor man saw his petition thus written out and knew it was in such hands, he went his way sure that the answer must come. And come it did. You know that story well. This is what Jesus Christ has done for you! He takes our poor unworthy prayers and amends them. He makes them perfect and sprinkles His own blood upon them and takes them up before His Father's Throne, and says, “Father, for My sake hear this sinner. For My sake give him pardon. Accept him and preserve him.” And then the gracious Father, who can deny nothing to His beloved Son, gives His glad assent and the blessing comes to you! This is a great mercy, but I will tell you of something which is a greater mercy still. It is transcendently encouraging that when we pray, Jesus Christ prays! But what is better still, is, that when we do *not* pray Jesus Christ prays!

Oh, my soul was ravished a little while ago when thinking over that passage about Peter—“Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But”—what? “But go and pray for yourself”? Well, that were good advice, but it is not so put. Our Master does not say, “But I will keep you watchful and so you shall be preserved.” That were a great blessing, but it is, “But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” Oh, you do not know when Jesus Christ prays for you! We pass through unseen dangers and we little know what are the dangers through which we pass!

We are something like Christian, when Bunyan pictures him as going through the valley of the shadow of death. He could hear the howling on the right hand and on the left, but he did not know—for it was very dark—how very bad the way was. But when the sun rose and he looked back and saw the pits and the traps and the quagmires and the fiends and evil spirits—then he could not but lift up his hands in astonishment that he had been brought through them all! When you and I get on the hilltops of Heaven and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us, even the songs of Heaven will not be loud enough for the gratitude we shall feel towards Him who, before the Eternal Throne, undid the mischief which Satan was doing upon earth!

O, how shall we thank Him that He never held His peace—that day and night He pointed to the wounds upon His hands and carried our names upon His breastplate? How we shall adore our great High Priest! With what transport shall we kiss those dear feet of His when we remember that He did never cease to intercede, but that even before Satan had be-

gan to tempt He had forestalled him and entered a plea in Heaven! You know He does not say, "Satan has sifted you and therefore I will pray," but, "Satan has desired to have you." He catches Satan even in his very *desire*—nips his desire in the bud—kills the cockatrice while it is yet in the shell.

He does not say, "But I have desired to pray for you." No, it is, "I have prayed for you. I have done it already. I have gone to Court and entered a counterplea even before the charge is made. I have countermined even before the mine has been dug. "O Jesus, what a comfort it is that You have pleaded the causes of my soul when I have been asleep! When I might have gone sleeping on down to Hell You were awake pleading the causes of my soul!" Here, then, is a cause of great joy and great gratitude!

5. Once more, Jesus Christ will plead the cause of His people and our heavenly Father will do so, too, in the Last Great Day of judgment. It is not a very pleasant thing for a man honestly to serve God and then to find his character taken from him. And yet, Beloved, this has been the lot of all true men in every age. The world never does permit a man to rebuke her follies without replying with a volley of mud. If she cannot stop the man's mouth, she blackens the man's character.

If you will turn to the lives of any of the saints of God you will discover that they were the victims of slanders of the grossest kind. To this very day it is asserted by Romanists that Martin Luther was a drunkard. In his own day he was called the German beast—that for lust he had to marry Catharine! If you turn to the life of Whitfield—our great and mighty Whitfield—in more modern times what was his character? Why he was accused of every crime that even Sodom knew! And Perjury stood up and swore that all was true. As for Wesley—I have heard that on one occasion he said that he had been charged with every crime in the calendar except drunkenness. And when a woman stood up in the crowd and accused him of that, he then said, "Blessed God, I have now had all manner of evil spoken against me falsely for Christ's name sake!"

You remember in the life of John Bunyan that episode concerning Agnes Beaumont? The good man suffered this young woman to ride behind him on his horse to a meeting at Gamlingay and for this his character was implicated in two charges before a magistrate which might have involved him in the crime of poisoning and laid the foundation for villainous reports of uncleanness! Yet John Bunyan was the purest and most heavenly-minded man who ever put his hand to paper. And he did put his hand to paper as no other man ever did who was not Inspired!

Now, this is not pleasant, but if you are a true Christian and you are called to occupy a prominent post in the service of God, be resigned to this fact—expect to lose your character. Expect not to have the good opinion of any but your God and those faithful ones, who like you, are willing to bear contempt. But what joy it is for all these holy men to know that at the last God will plead the cause of their souls! There will be a resurrection of persons as they really were, not as they seemed to be and were misrepresented. At the Last Great Day there will be a resurrection of reputations—reputations which had been laid into the dark grave which Calumny had dug—which had been covered with the sod of Contempt and over which there had been raised an epitaph of Infamy.

These reputations will all rise up! They have washed their robes and made them white. They are black no longer! The men who were pointed at and hooted and despised shall now go streaming up the shining way of fame and glory amidst the loud shouts of praise which the great Avenger shall receive from assembled worlds! They shall awake to Glory while others rise to shame and everlasting contempt! Oh, what must it be to be in the last day plucked and stripped of your plumes? What will be the fate of the Pharisee? Of the hypocrite who will find all his fine feathers torn away and himself left to hide his contemptible head in the caverns of the earth—but denied even *that* consolation—set out before the full blaze of day as an acknowledged liar before God and man?

But how different the condition of the poor man who lived and died in undeserved contempt! He who wakes up to find himself a bright and shining spirit and all his adversaries compelled to admit that God has pleaded the causes of his soul and has avenged him of his accusers! Thus, you see, our text is not a small one—the words are few but full of meaning. And I have but very poorly set forth what our soul, I trust, feels to be the truth—“You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.”

II. Now I want your solemn and earnest attention while for a few minutes I plead for what is our reasonable service, namely, THAT IF THE LORD HAS PLEADED THE CAUSES OF OUR SOUL, WE SHOULD PLEAD HIS CAUSE WHILE WE HAVE ANY BREATH TO PRAY OR A TONGUE WITH WHICH TO BEAR WITNESS FOR HIM.

Pleading the cause of Christ is the lifework of the Christian—it has to be done by some in the high places of the field. This age has given up all witness-bearing for Christ. We have grown so enamored of that gilded idol called charity that nowadays the Truth of God is fallen in the streets. It has come to be, by general consent, allowed by all men that religion is all very well in its way. That every man must keep his own religion and not meddle with other people’s—that a lie may be a truth, or a truth may be a lie and that whether a doctrine is a truth or a lie does not matter a button—that, in fact, we are all of us to be agreed upon this one point—that God’s Truth is not worthy our contending for.

That which is of man’s invention and that which is of God’s teaching are now put side by side in alliance and a compromise is effected in the name of brotherly love. I look upon Christendom at this present day as too much like a putrid swamp, a stagnant pool—the calm is deep, but deadly. O for some holy wind to stir the rotting mass! Modern charity would gag the mouth of every advocate of the Truth of God and send every faithful minister of God back to his bed to sleep his time out until the millennium shall dawn!

Brethren, I trust that an end shall come to this! And if bickering and strife and ill-will shall follow, though I shall lament these attendant evils, I shall rejoice that an earnest and healthy love of Truth and an earnest contention for it have been revived in the land. Rutherford, whose name must be dear to every Believer who knows his writings, says, “I thank God that I did never for a single moment put so much as a hoof, or a hair’s breadth of Christ’s Truth into compromise. That I did take Christ only and alone and did never leave room for the Roman harlot, but only for Christ—or Christ only!”

Here was a man shut up in Aberdeen, driven away from Anworth, weeping because, as he said, he envied the very sparrows which flew around the old Kirk where he was used to having such sweet visions of his Lord. And yet he said if the giving up of a jot of the Truth of God could have given him his liberty and enabled him to go back to minister to his faithful flock, he would not give it up! For to him Truth was dearer than liberty—no, dearer than even life itself! He says, “I am prepared for all consequences. And if even black-faced Death should knock at my door, I would bid him enter.” Our spiritual forefathers, on both sides the Tweed, were not men to be worried about the caprice of every oarsman.

They knew the Truth of God and they knew Christ and they did not divide between Christ and Truth and say, “Love Christ and then believe what you like.” No, they believed that Christ and Truth were identical. They believed Truth to be the Savior’s crown jewels and they would as soon think of loving a king and trampling on his crown as of pretending to love Christ and then trampling on His Truth!

What? Shall I pluck the clothes from my neighbor’s back and tell him that I love him? Will you pluck the Truth from Christ and throw it away as though it were but old rags and then say you love Christ? You cannot love Christ if you do not love Truth. And you cannot have Jesus unless you are willing to take up your cross daily and follow Him. For my part, God helping me, my soul is set on this—to court no more the good word of any man—to be no more a worshipper at the shrine of that false goddess, Charity! To have all the brotherly love I can, but to show it by an honest, outspoken declaration that the day is come when Rome is not to stand in England unchallenged.

Dressed in garments half Protestant and half Popish, the Church, as by law established, continues to make a mockery of honesty by using language in an unnatural sense! Juggling with men’s souls! Pampering Puseyites, indulging infidels, and yet claiming to be evangelical. An end must come to the infamy of teaching Popish doctrine in the Prayer Book and then preaching evangelical doctrine in the pulpit. The day is come when we must shake our garments of such a Church and when the best of her sons, though we have fraternized with them, must come out from her or we can have no more communion with them! The day of Babylon’s destruction comes! The cup is prepared and her sons and her daughters shall drink of it.

And only they shall be found clear in the day of account who shall come out and plead the cause of God’s pure Truth and God’s pure Truth alone. I think my Master deserves this of those of us who stand upon the high places of the field. And of you who are less known, but love your Master none the less, march with us shoulder to shoulder! Bear reproach with us! We have to bear it! Be as willing to be rejected as we are willing to be rejected! Be as willing to lose character and name and reputation and standing as we are! And if you cannot speak with a voice which can be heard as far—yet proclaim with a voice as clear and plain—that you love Truth and Christ and that for Truth and Christ you will give up everything—but that you cannot give up these!

Beloved, there is a way of bearing witness for Christ which you must adopt—that of witnessing by your consistency of conduct. Holiness is, after all, the mightiest weapon which a Christian can wield. Be you holy as

Christ is holy. Let no man spatter mire upon your garments. Walk so that you never put us to grief. As a Church be so pure and heavenly that you may be called the Nazarites of God who were purer than snow and whiter than milk. And then, though we have no wealth and boast not gorgeous architecture and the swell of pealing music, yet we shall have this for our music—your holiness, your purity, your separation from all uncleanness. And this for our architecture—that you are built up as a temple for the Lord!

Lastly, we can all plead for God in a private way. Oh, there is a great power in pleading for God with individuals. A man went to preach for seven summers on the village green and good was done. Joseph sometimes listened to the preacher, but only to ridicule him. There were many souls converted but he remained as hard as ever. A certain John who had felt the power of Truth, worked with him in the barn and one day, between the strokes of the flail, John spoke a word for Truth and for God. But Joseph laughed at him and hinted at hypocrisy and many other things.

Now John was very sensitive and his whole soul was filled with grief at Joseph's banter and after he had spoken, feeling a flush of emotion, he turned to the corner of the barn and hid his face while a flood of tears came streaming from his eyes. He wiped them away with the corner of his sleeve and came back to his flail. Joseph had noticed the tears though John had tried to hide them. And what argument could not do and what preaching could not do, those tears, through God the Holy Spirit, did effectually, for Joseph thought to himself, "What? Does John care for my soul and weep for my soul? Then it is time I should care and weep for it, too."

Beloved, witness thus for Christ! Be it mine to weep for the sins of the times and prophecy against them! Be it yours in your own private walk and conversation to rebuke private sin and by your loving earnestness to make Jesus Christ dear to many souls! Tell them that Jesus Christ came to save sinners! Tell them that He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him! Tell them that, "whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," and in this way you shall plead the cause of God, who has pleaded the causes of your soul.

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A MESSAGE FROM GOD FOR YOU

NO. 480

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 16, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion.
He will no more carry you away into captivity. He will visit your
iniquity, O daughter of Edom. He will discover your sins.”*
Lamentations 4:22.

EVERY Sunday we are insisting upon it that both the Law and the Gospel have a voice to universal manhood—the Law in its condemnation of every subject under its sway—and the Gospel in its gracious invitation and command to every creature under Heaven. Yet, at the same time, we must never forget that both the Law and the Gospel have a special voice to certain characters, that the Law has ten-fold thunders for peculiar sinners, and, on the other hand, the Gospel has a voice of unutterable sweetness to those favored persons who have by the Holy Spirit been prepared to hear its voice.

While there are texts which are universal and invitations whose range is as wide as fallen humanity, there are, at the same time, a still larger number of texts which are aimed like arrows at an appointed target. My text this morning can never be understood unless we clearly point out the characters to whom it is addressed. The blessing is not for the daughter of Edom, neither is the curse for the daughter of Zion. We must be very earnest with our own hearts this morning, to discover, if possible, whether we come under the number of those whose warfare is accomplished and whose sin is pardoned.

Or whether, on the other hand, we abide with the multitude on whom rests the curse of God and whose sins shall be discovered and punished by the right hand of the Most High. I have a double message from the Lord this morning. I say not alone, as did the blind Prophet of old, “Come in, you wife of Jeroboam, for I am sent to you with heavy tidings.” But I have also to say, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord, why stand you without?” According to the persons I address, my message will be as pleasant as ever was brought by those whose feet were beautiful upon the mountains because they published good tidings of great joy, or as dreadful as that which Daniel bore to the trembling monarch in the day when his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Our two messages we will *try to deliver in their order*. We shall then want your attention and patience for a minute while we answer the question—*Why the difference?* And then we will *press upon each character the force of the message*, that each may be led to believe what is addressed to him.

I. OUR FIRST MESSAGE IS ONE OF COMFORT. “The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. He will no more carry you away into captivity.”

1. We find, at the outset, *a joyous fact*. Read it with glistening eyes, you to whom it belongs—"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion." In the case of the kingdom of Judah, the people had suffered so much in their captivity that their God, who in His anger had put them from Him, felt His repenting kindle together and considered that they had suffered enough. "For she has received at the Lord's hand," said the Prophet, "double for all her sin."

Brethren, in our case we have not been punished at all, but yet the words may stand as they are, and be literally true, for the punishment of our iniquity *is* accomplished. Remember that sin *must* be punished. Any theology which offers the pardon of sin without a punishment ignores the major part of the character of God. God is love, but God is also just—as severely just as if He had no love, and yet as intensely loving as if He had no justice. To gain a just view of the Character of God you must perceive all His attributes as infinitely developed. Justice must have its infinity acknowledged as much as mercy. Sin *must* be punished.

This is the voice which thunders from the midst of the smoke and the fire of Sinai—"The soul that sins it shall die." "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them." "Sin must be punished," is written on the base of the eternal throne in letters of fire. And, as the damned in Hell behold it, their hopes are burned to ashes. Sin must be punished, or God must cease to be. The testimony of the Gospel is not that the punishment has been mitigated, or foregone, or that justice has had a bribe given it to close its mouth.

The consolation is far more sure and effectual—say unto the daughter of Zion that, "the punishment of her iniquity is *accomplished*." Christ has, for His people, borne all the punishment which they deserved. And now every soul for whom Christ died may read with exultation—"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished." God is satisfied, and asks no more. Sin deserved God's wrath. That wrath has spent itself on Christ. The black and gathering clouds had all been summoned to the tempest, and manhood stood beneath the dark canopy waiting till the clouds of vengeance should empty out their floods. "Stand aside!" said Jesus—"Stand aside, My Spouse, My Church, and I will suffer in your place."

Down dashed the drops of fire. The burning sleet swept terribly over His head and beat upon His poor defenseless Person, until the clouds had emptied out their awful burden and not a drop was left. Beloved, it was not that the cloud swept by the wind into another region where it tarries until it is again called forth—it was annihilated—it spent itself entirely upon Christ. There is no more punishment for the Believer since Christ has died for him. In His dying, our Lord has satisfied the Divine vengeance to the fullest.

Then this, too, *must satisfy our conscience*. The enlightened conscience of a man is almost as inexorable as the justice of God, for an awakened conscience, if you give it a false hope, will not rest upon it, but cries out for something more. Like the horseleech it says, "Give, give, give." Until you can offer to God a full satisfaction, you cannot give the conscience a quietus. But now, O daughter of Zion, let your conscience be at rest. Justice is satisfied. The Law is not despised—it is honored. It is established. God can now be just, severely so, and yet, seeing that your punishment is

accomplished, you may come with boldness unto Him, for no guilt does lie on you. You are accepted in the Beloved. Your guilt was laid on Him of old and you are now safe.”—

***In your Surety you are free,
His dear hands were pierced for you;
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One.”***

Come boldly unto God and rejoice in Him. Lest, however, while God is reconciled and conscience is quieted, our fears should even for an instant arise, let us repair to Gethsemane and Calvary, and see there this great sight—how the punishment of our iniquity is accomplished. There is the God of Heaven and of earth wrapped in human form. In the midst of those olives yonder, I see Him in an agony of prayer. He sweats, not as one who labors for the bread of earth, but as one who toils for Heaven. He sweats, “as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” It is not the sweat of His brow, only, but, “All His head, His hair, His garments, are bloody.” God is smiting Him and laying upon Him the punishments of our iniquities.

He rises with His heart exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. They hurry Him to Pilate’s judgment seat. The God of Heaven and earth stands in human form to be blasphemed and falsely accused before the tribunal of His cowardly creatures. He is taken by soldiers to Gabbatha. They strip, they scourge Him. Clots of gore are on the whip as it is lifted from His back. They buffet Him and bruise Him with their blows. As if His robe of blood were not enough, they throw about His shoulders an old cloak, and make Him a mimic king. Little knew they that He was the King of kings. He gives His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair. He hides not His face from shame and spitting.

Oh, what shall be said of You, Son of Man? In what words shall we describe Your grief? All you that pass by, behold, and see if there was ever any sorrow like unto His sorrow that was done unto Him! Oh God, You have broken Him with a rod of iron. All Your waves and Your billows have gone over Him. He looks, and there is none to help. He turns His eyes around, and there is none to comfort Him. And look, through the streets of Jerusalem He is hastened to His death. They nail Him to the transverse wood. They dash it into the ground. They dislocate His bones. He is poured out like water. All His bones are out of joint. He is brought into the dust of death—agonies are piled on agonies.

As in the classic fable, the giants piled Ossa upon Pelion, that they might reach the stars, so now that man may reach to Heaven, misery is piled on misery—what if I say Hell on Hell? But Jesus bears the dreadful load. At last He reaches the climax of anguish, grief could go no higher. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!” was the sum total of all human misery. The gathering up of all the wrath of God, and all the sorrow of man into one sentence. And thus He dies! Say unto the daughter of Zion that her punishment is accomplished. “It is finished!” Let the angels sing it. Sing it in the plains of glory. Tell it here on earth, and once again, say unto the daughter of Zion that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins! This, then, is the joyous note we have to sound this morning.

2. But—but—and here comes the solemn, soul-searching part of our discourse—Is the punishment of *my* iniquity accomplished? *Let us see to whom this message is sent.* Will you open your Bibles at the book of Lamentations—it is but a slender volume—and follow me a moment with your eyes, and with your hearts? This promise is sent to a certain character, and I know there are some here who will read their own history in it. In the first chapter and at the sixth verse you find it said of her—“From the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed.” We should have thought that Christ would have died for those who had some form and comeliness, but no, “God commends His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*.”

At the coming of the Holy Spirit into the soul, all self-righteousness melts away. Our merit is dissolved like the coating of the morning frost before the heat of the rising sun. In the light of the Holy Spirit the darkness of the creature is removed, and the fancied goodness of fallen humanity dies like a dream. Now the man perceives himself to be utterly vile. That which once he esteemed as making him lovely in the sight of God has withered before his eyes and all his glory is trailed in the mire. My Hearer, has all your self-righteousness been taken from you? For rest assured you are not this daughter of Zion unless your beauty has all departed, and all your boastful thoughts have been utterly slain.

Wonder of wonders! The eighth and ninth verses tell us, “Jerusalem has grievously sinned,” and the ninth verse tells us yet more, that, “*her filthiness is in her skirts.*” Thus, those for whom Christ died are made to feel their sin. While their righteousness becomes as filthy rags, their unrighteousness becomes loathsome and detestable in their sight. Holy Scripture rakes up the most terrible figures to set forth the abominable character of sin, some, even, which we would hardly dare to quote to meet the public ear, but which the renewed heart feels to be perfectly true. The heart discovers itself to be all wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores, till it abhors itself before God. “O Lord, I am vile.” “We are all together as an unclean thing.” “We are laden with iniquity.” Such are the cries of awakened souls, and it is to such as these that the gracious message is directed.

Look on, again, to the seventeenth verse and there you find that this filthiness has brought her into utter distress—“Zion spreads forth her hands and *there is none to comfort her.*” So those to whom this message is sent are brought, through a sense of sin, into a comfortless state. Ceremonies, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper—all these yield them no peace. They can no longer rest in their Church and Chapel attendance. A formal, notional religion would once satisfy them, but they find no rest for the soles of their feet in such a presence now. Time was when if they went through a prayer at night, and morning, and read a verse or two of the Bible, they thought all would be well. But now there is none to comfort them.

These refuges of lies are all swept away, for the furious hail of conviction has laid them level with the ground. Let us be certain of this, that there is no word of peace or comfort for us in our text until the beauty in which we once boasted has all been withered before the wintry blasts of the Law. Till our filthiness has been discovered before our sight, and we

have been led to an experimental acquaintance with our ruined and comfortless condition on account of our iniquities, there is no peace.

To make the case worse, this poor daughter of Zion is obliged to confess that she deserved all her sufferings. In the eighteenth verse she says—“*The Lord is righteous*; for I have rebelled against His commandments.” The soul feels now that God is just. Unrenewed persons find fault with God’s justice. Eternal punishment they quibble at. Hell is such a bugbear to them, that, just as every culprit will, of course, find fault with the prison and the gallows, so they rail at the wrath to come, though that wrath is just, notwithstanding all their objections to it.

But when the heart is really touched by Divine Grace, then it has no more to say for itself but pleads guilty at the bar of God’s great assize. And if the Judge should put on the black cap, and condemn it to be taken instantly to the place of execution, that soul could only say, “You are righteous, O Lord, for I have sinned.” I despair of ever finding a word of comfort for any man or woman among you, if you have not been brought to feel that you deserve the wrath of God. Come with the ropes about your necks, ready for execution, and you will find a God ready to forgive.

Further still—in the first verse of the second chapter you find that *her prayer was not yet heard*—“How has the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger and cast down from Heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger!” Well do I remember the time in my own experience when I prayed in vain. When I bowed my knees and the heavens were as brass, and not a word or answer of comfort was given to my languishing spirit! All who are converted do not pass through this, for no one experience is a standard for all, but remember I am seeking out a certain class this morning, for my text is addressed to a special character.

If you have been for months, yes, even for years, crying for mercy and still have not found it, let not this cast you down, for to you is this message sent this morning. You are this daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and I have to say unto you that “the punishment of your iniquity is accomplished.” Your prayer has come up with acceptance, for the Spirit inspired it, and Jesus offered it. God absolves you, from Heaven your forgiveness comes. Oh, believe the Word of the Lord and rejoice in it! “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

Further—as her prayer was not heard, so *every place of refuge was broken down*. In the eighth verse of the second chapter you find—“The Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: He has stretched out a line, He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying, therefore He made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.” Even what few stones of the ruined wall remained as a heap behind which the Israelite warriors might defend themselves were to be broken down. So God goes on overturning, overturning, overturning in the sinner’s heart till Christ comes in. After every hope has been broken down we are apt to build up another. “Peace, peace, where there is no peace,” is the sinner’s constant cry.

Our Lord, who is determined to bring us to the obedience of faith, continually beats down the sinner’s confidences, till at last there is not one

stone left upon another that is not thrown down. Then the sinner yields himself a captive and Free Grace leads him in triumph to the Cross. Is this your case this morning, my dear Hearer? If it is, then my sweet message is for you. "Go in peace, your sins which are many are all forgiven you!"

Further still—this daughter of Jerusalem was now brought into a state of *deep humiliation*. Look at the tenth verse of the second chapter—"The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence. They have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves in sackcloth; the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground." Here is a state of deep prostration of spirit! I do not want to enlarge on these points, because we have not time. And, what is more, there is no necessity for doing so, for you that have been brought through them understand them. And some of you who are in this state now will say, as I read the verses, "There is my picture. As face answers to face in a glass, so does the description of Jeremiah exactly answer to my condition."

Well then, to you who lie in deep soul prostration, conscious that the lowest position is not too low for you—to you is this gracious message sent—"The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished." Furthermore—it seems from the thirteenth verse that all her foes here let loose against her and her *grief exceeded all bounds* and prevented all comparison—"What thing shall I take to witness for you? What thing shall I liken to you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I equal to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your breach is great like the sea: who can heal you?" So the sinner feels as if he stood all alone. That sorrowing young woman over yonder thinks that no one has ever suffered what she is now enduring.

That trembling conscience there is writing this bitter thing against itself—"There was never such a sinner as I am, never one who had so hard a heart, and was so terribly broken on account of it!" You give a full vent to your sorrows, till your distress rolls like a torrent deep and wide. Yet it is not true that you are thus the only wayfarer in the path of repentance. Oh, but remember, that even though this were true, though all your enemies, your own heart, and all the devils in Hell should conspire against you, yet to you, even to you, thus says the Lord, the God of Hosts, "Comfort you, comfort you, my people; speak you comfortably unto Jerusalem and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

Not to keep you longer on this point, let me take you on to another. In the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the same chapter you will see that at last this afflicted daughter of Zion was brought to *constant prayer*—"Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give yourself no rest. Let not the apple of your eye cease. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up your hands toward Him," and so on. Thus the soul is brought to abide fast by the Mercy Seat and clings to the horns of the altar. At last the awakened spirit enters into a constant state of prayer, and its prayer is not so much an act, as a condition. You know that hymn—that litany, I was about to call it—

***"Wealth and honor I disclaim,
Earthly comforted, Lord, are vain,***

***These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die.***

Every verse ends with that intense desire—"Give me Christ or else I die." This comes to be the state of a soul which God intends to bless. It falls into such a condition that it must have the blessing—"Give me Christ or else *I die*." "I can take no denial." Again and again and again, the sound of its moaning goes up before the Lord God of Sabaoth. Its knocks at the gate of mercy are as frequent as the moments of the hour. Now, to you who are thus brought to pray because you cannot help it, who do not pray at set times, merely, but whose very life has become one perpetual prayer for mercy—to you the Master speaks today. (Lord! Open their ears that they may hear)! "The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished."

I have no time to go further into this case of the daughter of Zion. If you read the whole book of Lamentations through, it will well repay you. If you have ever passed through a state of conviction—if the Law has ever had its perfect work in you—you will find that the Lamentations of Jeremiah will suit you. And when you get to the verse with which we commenced our reading this morning, you will read it with a holy unction resting on it—"It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because His compassions fail not." Now if you thus can read it, then remember there is no doubt at all about the fact that the precious word of this morning is for you! Lay hold on it by faith! Feed on it, live on it, and rejoice!

3. I have not yet, however, told this message perfectly, for we must not overlook a third point. We have had a joyous fact, then a chosen person, and now there is *a precious promise*. "I will no more carry you away into captivity." You are in captivity now, but it is the last you shall ever have. You are sorrowing on account of sin and troubled even to despair. But you *are* now forgiven—not you *shall* be but you *are*. All the wrath was laid on Christ. There is none remaining upon you. You are forgiven and your captivity is turned as the streams in the south. Let your mouth be filled with laughter and your tongue with singing, for the Lord has done great things for you!

These convictions of yours shall never return again in their present terror—just cling to the Rock of Ages and no wave shall bear you back into the deeps. You shall go through the wilderness but once. You shall pass through the Jordan of a Savior's blood, and then you shall enter into Canaan and rest, for, "we that have believed do enter into rest." And as to the future, in the world to come there is no captivity for you. All your Hell is past. Tophet burns not for you, neither can the pit shut its mouth upon you. All that you deserve of the wrath of God, Christ has endured, and there is not a drop remaining for you.

Come to the golden chalice into which God drained His wrath and look at the sparkling wine of love which fills it. Ah, how changed from what it once was! 'Twas full and foul and black—each drop was Tophet—and the whole of it eternal misery. Christ drained it. To the very dregs He drained it. Turning it upside down, He said, "It is finished!" And not a drop was left. Come, I say, to it, for it is not empty now. It is full again, but with what is it filled with? It is full to the brim and overflowing with *love* unsearchable, eternal, Divine. Come and drink—

***"Calvary's summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of Grace.***

Count the purple drops and say,

**Thus my sins were borne away.
Now no more His wrath we dread,
Vengeance smote our Surety's head.
Justice now demands no more,
He has paid the dreadful score.
Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in the Savior's blood,
Zion, O, how blessed are you,
Justified from all things now."**

"I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord." You may have *troubles*, but you will never have *punishment*. You may know affliction, but you shall never know wrath. You may go to the grave, but you shall never go to Hell. You shall descend into the regions of the dead, but never into the regions of the damned. The Evil One may bruise your heel, but he shall never break your head. You may be in prison under doubts, but you shall never be in prison under condemnation. "He will no more carry you away into captivity."

Your punishment is all paid for by Another. You are free today. Come forth out from the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, and brought out His people and delivered them with His own right hand! Thus have I sought, as best I could, to deliver my first message. I hope many will be comforted thereby.

II. We shall now turn to our second, which is, BURDEN OF WOE. Daughter of Edom! Thus says the Lord unto you—"I will visit your iniquity." Unbeliever, you who have never felt your need of Christ and never fled to Him, to you He says, "I will visit your iniquity." His justice tarries but it is sure. His axe seems rusty, but it is sharp. The sins of the past are not buried. Or if they are, they shall have a resurrection. Your thoughts, your words, your deeds—all shall return in terror on your head. You shall begin, even in this life, to feel some of this punishment. On your dying bed your frail tenement shall creak and you shall see the blazing of the furnace of fire through the rifts of your crumbling cottage.

When you shall lie dying, then shall the messengers of the Emperor of Heaven stand about your bed and summon you to judgment. Your cheeks shall blanch, however brazen your brow may now be. Then, strong Man, you shall be bowed down, and your loins shall be loosened—for when God deals with you, you shall feel His hand—even though you were girt about with bars of brass or triple steel. And then you die. Your death shall be the foretaste of the second death. Your soul descends into the pit among your kindred, and you begin to feel what God can do against the men who laughed, despised, and defied Him. Then shall your oaths be all fulfilled. Then shall your lusting and your reveling come to you in their true light.

Then shall you hear ringing in your conscience the echo of the Divine sentence, "You deserve" all this, for God gave you warning when He said, "I will surely visit you for your iniquity." Then shall the trumpet ring—"Awake! Awake! You dead, and come to judgment!" From sea and land they start to live again. Your soul comes back to its body which was its partner in guilt. I see you, and the multitudes like you, standing there while the Great White Throne is lifted up on high. The righteous have been gathered out from among the crowd and you remain. And, now,

hark! Listen to a voice more dread than thunder—"Bind them up in bundles to burn them! The drunkard with the drunkard. The swearer with the swearer. The careless, the proud, the self-righteous—each with each—and cast them into the furnace of fire."

It is done and where are you now, Sinner? Do you say of me this morning—"I knew that you would speak not good but evil unto me"? Another day you shall bless your stern reprover! Call me not your enemy. It is your *sin* that is your enemy. I make not Hell. I do but warn you of it with a brother's love. You dig Hell yourself. You yourself fill it and the breath of your sins shall fan the fire. "The Lord of Hosts *will* visit your iniquity, O daughter of Edom." Hear it. Harken you to it, for it is the voice of God which now forewarns you. Beware, O careless Soul, beware of forgetting God lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. I have heavy tidings indeed from the Lord to you.

But who is this daughter of Edom? As we searched for the daughter of Zion just now, so we must also search for the daughter of Edom. The verse preceding our text seems to give us some inkling of who she is. Of course it refers to the race of Esau, who inhabited such cities as Bozrah and Petra, which are now become a desolate wilderness. It seems, then, according to the twenty-first verse, that the daughter of Edom was a *mirthful one*. In irony and sarcasm the Prophet says—"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwell in the land of Uz. The cup shall pass through unto you; you shall be drunken and shall make yourself naked."

There is a holy joy which belongs unto the people of God. There is an unholy mirth which is a sure sign of a graceless state. You say from day to day, "How shall we amuse ourselves? What next gaiety? And what new levity? With what new liquor shall we fill the bowl of merriment? What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Pleasure is your life, your only thought. Ah, daughter of Edom, there is sackcloth for your fine linen. There are ashes for all your ornaments. Your earrings shall give place to everlasting teardrops and all your beauty shall turn to rottenness and decay!

Weep, all you that thus make mirth in the presence of the avenging Judge, for the day comes when He shall turn your laughter into mourning, and all your joys shall be ended! "Thus says the Lord: say, a sword, a sword is sharpened and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter. It is furbished that it may glitter: should he then make mirth?"

Edom, moreover dwelt *very carelessly*, she dwelt in the land of Uz, far from danger. Her dwelling was among the rocks. Petra, the stony city, was cut out of the live rock. The daughter of Edom said in her heart, "Who shall come here to disturb the eagle's nest? The son of Esau dwells like an eagle in his nest, and he pounces down upon his prey before his victim is aware. Who shall go up and bind the strong eagle, or pull forth his feathers from his mighty wings? Lo, he dares to look in the face of the sun, and he laughs at the spear of the hunter—who shall bring him down?"

Thus says the lord, "O daughter of Edom, I will visit your iniquity." "Though you exalt yourself as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there will I bring you down, says the Lord." You proud men and women! You say, "Will God deal with us? Will He treat us

as common sinners? Even if He should, we will not care! Fill high the bowl and let us drink, even though it is at Belshazzar's feast. We will drink, though there be damnation in the cup!" Thus you speak, but thus says the Lord, even as He said unto Moab—"I will bring down your high looks. I will trample you like straw is trod for the dunghill, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

More than this. It appears that this daughter of Edom rejoiced because of the sorrow of Zion, and made mirth and *merriment over the sorrows of others*. Do you not hear even the wise men say—"Ah, these driveling hypocrites, whining about sin! Why, it is only a peccadillo, a mere trifle!" "Look," says one, "I am a man of the world. I know nothing of these women's fears and child-like trembling. Why do you sit and hear a man talk to you like this, and tell you of Hell and of judgment—do you believe it? "No," says this man "I know nothing of your care. I despise the narrow spirits that believe in justice and in wrath to come!"

O haughty boaster, as the Lord my God lives, the day shall come when you shall be trod as ashes under the soles of our feet. Beware, for when the Avenger comes forth, a great ransom shall not deliver you! I see the floods bursting forth on the earth. Noah, the preacher of righteousness, has been laughed at and called an old hypocrite for talking of God's destroying nations. He is shut in yonder ark—and what do you think, now, of the Prophet—what do you think, now, of the preacher of righteousness? You are swept away. The waves have covered you. A few of your strong ones climb to the tops of the hills but the all-devouring waters reach them there. I hear their last shriek of awful anguish—there is not a single note of unbelief in it now.

As you go down and the gurgling waters cover you, your last verdict is that the Prophet was right and you were fools. To your deathbeds I make my appeal. I appeal from your drunken lives to the sad sobriety of death. From all your gaiety, and carelessness, and contempt today, I appeal to your last hours, and to your resurrection terrors! God help you! God help you to repent! But heavy, O daughter of Edom, heavy is your curse. God will visit your iniquity upon you!

It seems, too, from a passage in Malachi, first chapter and fourth verse, that Edom always retained a hope, a vain, a self-sufficient confidence. "Whereas Edom says, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus says the Lord of Hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down. And they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord has indignation forever." So there are some of you who say, "I dread not a loss of hope! Why, I have fifty refuges. I trust in this, and that, and the other, and when I do despair a moment, yet I pluck up heart again." Ah, daughter of Edom, God will visit you for your iniquity, and your vain confidences shall be as stubble to the flame.

Besides, it seems that this daughter of Edom was very proud. Jeremiah describes her in the forty-ninth chapter and the sixteenth verse, in much the same language as Obadiah. But this tremendous pride was brought low at the last. And so also all those who think themselves righteous shall find themselves low at last. They rest and trust in the rotten and broken reed of their own doings and woe shall be unto them, for God will visit them for their sins.

I shall not enlarge further, except on that special word of warning with which the verse ends, "*I will discover your sins.*" Let every sinner here be afraid because of this! You have hidden your sin. He will discover it. It may be it was last night—it was in a very secret place and you contrived so that none might track you. But the All-Seeing One will discover your sin. "How are the things of Esau searched out! How are his hidden things sought up!" I may address some here who wear a very excellent moral character in the eyes of their neighbors, but if those neighbors did but know all, they would loathe them utterly. Your disguises are torn asunder, your masks are plucked away. The Revealer of Secrets comes forth. Dreadful shall be the day when, with sound of trumpet, every secret iniquity shall be published in the housetops.

The day comes when, as Achan stood guilty before Joshua, so shall every man hear it said, "Be sure your sin will find you out." This is your portion, daughter of Edom! Your secret sins shall all be published in the light of the sun, for God will surely visit you!

III. The time expires but I must just notice the next point—WHAT IS THE REASON WHY THERE ARE THESE DIFFERENT MESSAGES? The reason why I had to publish a message of mercy to the daughter of Zion just now was *Sovereign Grace*. The daughter of Zion had no *right* to pardon. She had done nothing to deserve it, but God had chosen her and had entered into Covenant with Abraham concerning her—that He would not leave nor forsake her. Everlasting love preserved deliverance for the beloved city. Our God had kindled in her heart thoughts of repentance, and in His sovereignty, because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, He sent her the gracious message of full remission by an accomplished punishment.

But why was the second message sent to the daughter of Edom? Here it is not the line of sovereignty, but the line of justice. He sent it *because the daughter of Edom deserved it*. Sinner, when God says He will punish sin, you may kick against it if you will, but your conscience tells you—you deserve to be punished. God will not smite you more than you deserve, but let Him only give you as much, and wrath will come upon you to the uttermost. Edom has waxed proud. She has been careless. She has despised God. She is unbelieving. She repents not. Therefore shall her iniquity be published, and God shall visit it upon her head.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT CLAIMS HAVE THESE MESSAGES TO OUR FAITH? Well, we believe this Bible to be the Word of God. I know we live in a day when even a bishop has ventured to impugn plenary Inspiration. Do not attach too much importance to this new attack. It has no novelty in it. It is an old enemy, long since wounded to the heart, which now attempts a revival of its force. We have been alarmed at a man of straw, and a deal of noise has been made about nothing. The servants of Zion's household are more glorious than this new hero of error, and are more than a match for him.

We did think at first that there might be some force in his objections, but now we laugh them to scorn. Ridicule is the only answer they deserve. Let even the young children and the old women in the streets of Zion laugh at the new adversary! We believe still, and I hope that ever in this Christian land, and from this pulpit—I may always say that we believe

this Book to be the Word of God. Well then, you to whom the first message is sent, believe it. You said, as I read the description just now, "That is my case." Very well, then, the punishment of your iniquity is accomplished. Do not say, "I will *try* and believe it," but *believe* it. Do not say, "I hope it is true." It is *true*.

Believe it and walk out of this house full of joy, saying in your spirit, "My punishment was borne by Christ. I shall never be carried into captivity any more. Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ my Lord. I am accepted, I am forgiven." Praise Him every day, now that His anger has passed away forever, and let the men of the world see how happy a Christian can be. "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God now accepts your works. Let your garments be always white. And let your head lack no ointment." Does anybody object to that quotation? Object to Solomon, and not to me! I intend, God helping me, to rejoice and be glad all my days.

As for the second message, again I say this Book is God's Word and it is true. Believe it. "Oh," says one, "but if I believed it, I should be full of awful anguish." Would to God you were! For do you not see that then you would come under the description of the daughter of Zion, and then the promise would be yours, for what is the Law sent for? To dog men to Hell? No, but to be our teacher to bring us to Christ. The schoolmasters in the old Greek times were such cruel fellows that no boys would go to school voluntarily, so they had a teacher, who with a stick, went round to the parents' houses and whipped the boys to school.

Now we are so afraid to come to Christ, though He is a good and tender Master, that He employs the Law to go round to our houses to whip us to Himself, His peace, His great salvation. Ah, I would I could drive you to the Savior, for these thunders of today are meant to bring you from under the Law that you may put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Oh, daughter of Edom, careless and proud, your doom is certain! The wrath of God is sure. Oh that you would but believe this, and that your heart were broken, for then we might come to you again, and say, "Thus says the Lord, I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities and like a thick cloud your sins."

May God bless the words of this morning and unto His name be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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